CAMPAIGNING IN THE BALKANS

HAROLD LAKE

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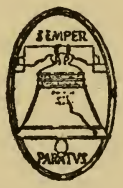
BY

Lieutenant Harold Lake



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PART I

CHAPTER I

THE BULGAR ON THE HILL

THERE is a hill which rises to the north of the small and ugly village of Ambarkoj, which in its turn is twelve miles north of Salonika. It is not a particularly impressive hill, but it happens to command a good view of the country for many miles around, so I climbed to the top of it, uncomfortably enough by reason of the tangle of evergreen oak, the harsh edges of the rock, and the thickets of brambles. Right on the summit I found all that the birds and beasts and sun and storm of Macedonia had left of a man who must have fallen in one of the half-forgotten wars which have troubled the land. There were the scattered bones. Rags of clothing were embedded in the ground. Close at hand a couple of clips of cartridges proved that he had fallen in the midst of his fight. There was the merest remnant of his cap, and there was a button which showed him to have been a Bulgarian. His rifle had been taken

away but the rest had been left as it fell, left to remain through the years, to be a symbol and token of all that land which one could see standing there beside the tangled rubbish which used to be a man.

It is hard to think of a better place than that for the beginning of some account of the country of which so many tens of thousands of our men are gaining an intimate knowledge, and of their difficulties and sufferings and achievements. From that high place it is possible to see all the different kinds of land which go to make up Macedonia, and to remember all the problems which mountain, valley, and plain present. And those forgotten bones were the witness of the history of the country, of all that past conduct of its affairs, of all its custom and habit—of all those things which are producing so direct an effect on our life today. It may not appear that there is an connection between a dead Bulgarian on a little hill three thousand miles away and the war-time price of sugar in England, and yet the connection exists, and will be made plain later on.

If you were to stand where I was standing and face the north, you would have on your left a great plain rolling away to a blue wall of distant mountains in the west. Immediately before you, but still a little to the left, you would see a line of trees and a fresh green in the herbage which would

prove the presence of water with occasional swamps. Due north and on all the right would be the hills, some of them smooth and gentle, some of them great gray mountains. Between them you would find the little valleys, and the occasional habitations of men.

One valley there is in particular. It lies at the foot of the hill which, indeed, closes the southern end of it. From the line where the evergreen oak ends it sweeps downward very gently and delicately for about a couple of miles to where a tiny village stands at the foot of its eastern slope, and then winds out of sight round a westerly bend. On either side it is fenced by considerable hills. They rise about it, very grim and forbidding. It is not an easy valley to enter from any direction, and in consequence it has all the appearance of prosperity and comfort. The soil is cultivated. There are the wide fields of maize, and the great patches of tobacco. In one part of it I found a whole series of plots given over to funny little plants which made me realize for the first time that the tomato and the vegetable marrow are very closely related to each other. There is abundant pasture. Two small square towers of whitish brick mark the presence of springs, and all the appearance of the ground proves that you could find water anywhere by sinking a well twenty feet deep or less. The houses of the village have a

settled, established appearance, very unlike that of the flimsy mud-plastered hovels of Ambarkoj. It looks like a place where the generations have followed each other in peace, and that is very unusual in Macedonia. The bones of the dead Bulgarian are there to explain why such tranquillity is unusual; the sheltering hills give the reason for the happiness of this one village.

All that delightful valley is a picture of what Macedonia might be, and the most insistent reminder of what it is not. Even the people are different. Wandering down the length of it one day I found two women and a man working in the fields, with two great black pigs frisking and gamboling round them like a couple of terriers. I asked some question about water, and they stood up and answered to the best of their power, frankly and courteously. The day after, in another village across the hills and down in the plain three miles to the west, I tried to buy some eggs, and met with nothing but glum silence, averted eyes and closed doors. They were the people of the plain, whose homes lay open and defenceless; they were a people accustomed to war.

As the village of the hills stands for what Macedonia might be, so does Karadza Kadi, the village of the plain, stand for what it is. It is a village which knows and obeys the law of that war-troubled land. The homes of its people are poor,

mean structures with never a hint or trace of beauty or security about them. If they were burnt down and destroyed it would be no great loss, for they could be rebuilt so easily. All around stretch the miles of utterly fertile land, but only tiny patches are cultivated. The approach to the village might easily be made into a good safe road but it is left a wretched, half-obliterated track swamped with water and mud at every time of rain.

For this is the law of Macedonia, that you shall not build yourself a secure and costly home which your enemy may at any time destroy or take for himself; you shall not plant great fields or any more than is strictly necessary for yourself lest your enemy come and reap your rich harvest; you shall not make an easy road to your home lest your enemy come down it swiftly to your destruction. It is better and safer to have so poor a house that it is not worth the burning, so small a crop that it is not worth the gathering, so painful a road that it is not worth the traveling. The dead Bulgarian explained all these things. The poor confusion of his bones was the witness that this country has not ceased to be ravaged by war, that it has known no accustomed peace, that its people have not dared to surround themselves with those permanent things which are the mark of happier lands.

There can be, one imagines, few more fertile

countries in the world, and few indeed in Europe. All sorts of rare, desirable things will grow on its soil in splendid profusion. Maize is a most flourishing crop. Tobacco is grown here which is valued all over the world. Such things as the little grapes which are turned into currants and raisins thrive on the hillsides, and there are the plantations from which comes attar of roses. There does not appear to be any end to the possibilities of Macedonia. Civilized nations spend millions in reclaiming land in far countries, in clearing it of swamps, mosquitoes and malaria, in perfecting systems of drainage and irrigation, and yet here is this rich land, in Europe itself, barren and desolate, given over to thistles and scrub, with the poison of fever haunting every valley, with miserable tracks instead of roads—wasted altogether.

For Macedonia today is not very far from being a wilderness. Before the army came to Salonika there was scarcely a road worthy of the name between the sea and the Bela Sitza range and the Struma. There are the hundreds of square miles that might be so busy growing food for man and beast, and they grow nothing but thistles. The hillsides might be rich with vineyards, and they are desolate with evergreen oak. There is water everywhere, and it is allowed to serve a little space and then to wander aimlessly to the sea. There might be herds of great cattle and mighty

flocks of sheep, but all you shall find is a few tiny cows, a few attenuated goats, and a few scraggy, fleshless sheep. Each wretched village worries along as best it may, a self-contained community, having little traffic with the outer world. And between the villages there sweep the miles of the wasted land. Wasted because here is no security of tenure, no consecutive rule, no assurance that he who sows shall also reap. Wasted because it is a country where you may find the bones of the dead on the tops of little hills.

And in addition to being wasted, the country is poisonous. In every low-lying, swampy area the mosquito finds an admirable home prepared; and there arises the problem of malaria. Modern science understnds how to deal with that problem. Macedonia could be cleared of it as other countries have been cleared. Drainage and the discipline of fire would make the country free—only there has been no one sufficiently interested in the country to take the matter up. The natives, I suppose, are accustomed to fever, or perhaps they develop immunity. No one from the outside has been attracted to the place. Even the wildest American millionaire would shrink from working out development schemes in a country compared with which the average South American republic is a model of stable and constitutional government. People have been fighting in and for and about

Macedonia from the dawn of history, and so we have it as it is today.

That such a land should be in such a condition is a fact that arouses a very bitter kind of anger. Few of us, perhaps, have brought, or will bring, pleasant memories away from it, but that is the fault, not of the land, but of the circumstances which have made it what it is. And in spite of the things we endured in it, we shall probably remember as the years pass by that it is a country which has great beauty, grandeur, and an appealing loveliness, as one moves from place to place and learns all the variety of it. We shall remember again the wooded slopes of Kotos, Ajvasil resting so happily on the border of the lake, the dim mountains that hide Fort Rupel, and the little streams that run in secret valleys. We shall remember such things as these; perhaps we shall forget the unpleasant facts. But those unpleasant facts are the things which have to be remembered at this time, and in any future considering of the Salonika campaign; for they have the power to condition and to limit every operation that has been or will be planned. They are more potent to hinder than all the strength of the enemy. When our rulers decided on the expedition they opened war not against man alone, but also against Nature—Nature neglected, misused, spurned. The generations to come may ask why they added such a

task to the burden we were already bearing. It is not my business to ask that question, but—the fact must be borne in mind, for if it is not remembered there may be heavy injustice to those who were charged to carry out the adventure.

An army is a large and complex thing with innumerable needs. If you send it to any distant place you must either be prepared to supply those needs or else be very certain that they can be supplied on the spot. Whether or not the fact was realized, one cannot say, but a fact it is that scarcely a single need of our army in Macedonia can be supplied on the spot. I cannot, indeed, remember a single article that was bought in large quantities from the inhabitants except forage. That was rounded up and stacked—under guard—at convenient places, but there was little or nothing besides.

The land has no food to give us. The great spaces which might have grown corn are, as I have said, busy with thistles. The cattle are so scarce and of such shocking quality that if the army had begun to eat them they would have been extinct in a week and the troops would have been mutinously demanding bully beef. All our corn and meat came, and still must come, across the perilous sea. There were, of course, such trifles as melons, eggs and tomatoes and occasional fowls, but all that Macedonia can give us to eat is the merest

drop in the bucket. Every fresh battalion that is sent to Salonika means that more ships must bring food behind it, and keep on bringing it so long as it remains there.

And not food alone, but everything else which an army can possibly require. Guns and ammunition must be brought as a matter of course, but there must be also all clothing, every detail of equipment, tools for every imaginable purpose, materials for putting up wire entanglements—there is not enough wood in the country to form the uprights—and all sorts of hospital stores. Paper, pens and pencils, books, bacon, baths, soap, candles, tobacco, matches—all such things must be brought across the sea. Galvanized iron, wagons, mules, telephone wire, water buckets and bivouac sheets—every imaginable thing. For the one thing certain about Macedonia is that you will not find in the country anything that you want.

The relation between the dead Bulgar and the price of sugar in England is, perhaps, becoming apparent. Because so many ships are busy carrying things to the Salonika army there are the fewer to fetch and carry for the people at home; the traffic of the seas is diverted, and Britain has to put up with the consequences. But if, on the other hand, Macedonia in the past had been free from war, with power to fulfill its own enormous possibilities, half the stuff required might have been bought

on the spot, and half the transport saved.

But that, after all, is a side issue. The problems of sea transport are the problems of the people who sent us there. My concern is only with our own problems, those interesting puzzles which began as soon as the stuff reached the wharves at Salonika, and which do continually perplex and worry all sorts of people, high and low, and must be the greatest trouble General Sarrail has ever known. For we came to a country without roads, and undertook to push armies into that country along tracks radiating as do the sticks of a fan. A country without bridges also, and one in which the most innocent trickle of a stream may whirl up into a great river in the course of an afternoon. A country where a way had to be found across swamps, and over great hills—a way where no way had been before.

And a modern army cannot be content with mere tracks, trodden down though they may be by bare feet and unshod bullocks through the years. A modern army has heavy, cumbersome things to carry with it—great guns, ammunition limbers and the rest. These heavy things drive the tires into the ground till at last a swamp is reached which cries a halt to all adventuring. Moreover, a modern army in a wilderness has to be fed. If it will advance, then food must be brought up to it, day after day. There must be

rations enough for all the men, forage for all the animals, material to repair all the inevitable wastage of war. These things must be close up to the troops and instantly available. They must follow close behind each new advance if the ground once taken is to be held. If its transport breaks down the army is defeated and must inevitably retire, or die most uselessly where it stands—and an army which dies uselessly is rather worse than no army at all. It comes to this, that if you cannot keep your army supplied you must not send it forward.

That was the first problem of the Salonika expedition, and it is still and will always be the chief difficulty in the way. Standing there beside that dead Bulgar one could realize it all so clearly. Transport was not so great a difficulty when he lived and died. Heavy artillery was not of the first importance and, to a considerable extent, armies could live on the land which they occupied. A man could go out with his ammunition and his rifle and a loaf of bread and do his work for days on end. His campaigning did not call for well-made roads and strings of motor lorries. It was a simple matter of skirmishing men, of good shooting, and desperate unrecorded little conflicts.

But that old order has changed. The Bulgar of today digs himself excellent trenches from which he must be shelled with heavy guns. To aid him

he has all sorts of German guns, brought up along carefully prepared roads to the selected positions. For a defence he has the almost impassable country before him, so that he can deal at leisure with his enemies as they advance to the attack. That, at least, was the state of things at the beginning of the Salonika adventure.

CHAPTER II

ROADS AND THEIR MAKING

EASTWARD from Salonika runs the road which leads at last to Stavros and all the land which controls the mouth of the Struma. Some five miles out from the town it passes through the village of Kireckoj.

It is a fine road, one of the best whcih the army has made in all the country. Broad and smooth it sweeps onward and upward, threading the valleys which lead at last to the Hortiack plateau. But when it comes to Kireckoj it is beaten altogether, forced to remember that it is in Macedonia and most unkindly reminded that it cannot behave as a road might in a civilized country. I shall never forget the surprise and amusement and understanding which came in due succession when first I marched up that road and encountered that obstructive village.

We had been coming so freely and easily, with room to spare for the passing of all the bustling motor lorries which raced to and fro. The surface was so good that marching was easy. The gradient

had been so excellently contrived that we climbed without effort higher and higher into the heart of the hills. And then quite suddenly we saw a few houses before us. Our road disappeared between them, and a private, with the armlet of the military police, stepped forward and stopped our little column. In a little while we realized that he had a companion who was busy at the side of the road with a telephone. Presently another body of marching men appeared, and when they had passed we were told that we might go on.

We passed between the houses of Kireckoj. Our fine, broad road had vanished, strangled in mid-career. In its place we had a narrow, winding track that worked a zig-zag course upwards and onwards. If we met a little native cart we had to pass it in single file. How motor lorries ever contrive to get through the place I cannot imagine. It must be a far longer and more trying performance than the rest of the five-mile run to Salonika, yet scores of them accomplish it daily. When at last we came out at the other end and recovered our road we found another policeman and another telephone operator stationed at the side of it, and then we understood. They were on duty there all the time to prevent collisions in the village. They were the signalmen of the road whose duty it was to see that no one went forward from either end unless it was certain that the way was clear.

There could not be a better illustration of the contrast between Macedonia as it is and Macedonia as the warfare of today requires it to be, or as, indeed, modern civilization requires it to be. As Eastern villages go, Kireckoj is very good indeed. Planted in the security of the hills, its houses are well built and substantial. It is quite unusually clean, its shops do not wear the general Macedonian air of being utterly ashamed of themselves, and its people appear to be happy, prosperous and unafraid. But there was that horrid little winding street, a silent witness to that hatred of free movement and development which marks the East, a barrier to trade as well as to war, the symbol of a people who are content if only they are allowed to live in a close-packed little circle remote from the striving of the world.

They may be right, of course. That is a question with which I have no present concern. The only point of immediate importance is that their symbolical street is a confounded nuisance to soldiers who have a war to worry about. It was well enough, no doubt, in the days before artillery reigned on the battlefield and hiding carefully behind the corner of a house the soldier shot his less cautious enemy and advanced to the next corner. But it is not at all well now, as any gunner can testify who has tried to take a battery through that serpentine alley.

I have written so much about Kireckoj, not because it is exceptional, but because it is so thoroughly typical. It is a village of the very best type, and yet it turns the march of an army into a sort of inglorious obstacle race, and all the villages of Macedonia have the same awkward characteristic. I do not know one with a road running clear through from end to end. Salonika itself has streets which twist and turn in every direction.

This was one of the facts which had to be considered when the plans were made for pushing the army forward. It is natural when one is making a road in a new place to follow any existing tracks. Those tracks have usually been chosen by the wisdom of the centuries because they afford the easiest way of getting from one place to another. The folly of men is certainly stupendous, but you don't get people toiling along a difficult way year after year when an easier and safer way is open to them. Therefore it would have been natural for the new roads to follow the old paths, but the nature of these obstructive villages made such a simple course very generally impossible. In the particular case of Kireckoj it could scarcely be avoided, for the valley in which it lies is so narrow and precipitous that there was no room to swing round it on one side or the other.

What sort of a task the engineers must have

had who planned the first roads out from Salonika one can only imagine by studying the obstacles which they avoided or overcame, the expedients to which they were compelled, and the occasional awkwardness of their results. Out in the country beyond they could, of course, work with a freer hand. On the waste land between the villages you can put a road practically where you like, and the villages themselves can usually be avoided.

But there, where there are no dwellings to be respected, no claims for compensation to be considered, there are other problems, no less intricate and baffling. Nothing but personal experience could teach the unkindness of those problems, but any man who served for any length of time in the Salonika army will remember and understand. All of us had our turn at road-making at one time or another, and it is more than likely that all the troops at present in Macedonia or who may be sent there in the future will have the same tasks to perform, for as I have tried to insist, roads are the first essential. Somehow or other they had to be made, improvised or improved as the army pushed forward, with all its inevitable guns and lorries and limbers, trailing along behind.

There is one stretch of road in Macedonia which I shall be remembering with mingled hatred and affection all the days of my life. When we came to the place and pitched our camp on the hills

above, nothing at all had been done. Probably some one at General Headquarters had drawn a line on the map from one point to another and said, "Make a road here," but that was all. The rest was left to us and the engineers who were our rulers and instructors for the time being. It was our job, and we were to get on with as best we could.

High up on the right the great gray hills were piled; on the left ran the river, with the wide plain beyond. When the engineers went out to mark the track of the road they looked at the hills and shook their heads, went down to the river bed and shook their heads again. I was new to Macedonia in those days and I had never seen one of the storms which are so characteristic of that violent country. Also I was puzzled by the fact that considerable boulders were strewn about at the foot of the hills, some of them almost as far away as the bed of the river. It was difficult to see how they had come to roll down the slope and across so much level ground. . . . After a time I realized that they had simply been swept along by the torrents of water rushing down the hills, and the difficulties of the engineers began to appear even to me.

They went to and fro, those trained and competent men, studying the ground with quick, accustomed eyes. They studied the ground about the

river till they had decided on a line above which the water was not likely to rise; they studied every turn and swerve of the slope coming down from the hills till they had found where the descending water would pour on to their road, and where it would be safe from such attacks. Presently they were marking out the track, and appointing places for bridges and culverts, ordaining cuttings and embankments. There was a magic in their curt sentences which in the end had the power of making one see the road as it would be—as indeed it is today—although one could not in the least understand how it was to be done, what material was to be used, where it was to come from, or how it was to be brought to the required position. As I have said, I was new to Macedonia, and all these things were mysteries. I had not at that time begun to learn how much can be done with very little in the way of tools or material.

The next day we were busy opening a quarry. The great advantage of working in a wilderness is that you can take such liberties with it. If you desire to remove a mountain and throw it into a valley it is not necessary to get permission from the landlord before you begin. The engineers chose a place in the hillside and we set to work to clear away the scrub and the thin layer of earth which covered the face of the stone. Down below a space was cleared where the stone could be stacked, and

the chubby youth in charge of the operations remarked airily that as soon as it was in good working order we should be getting out a hundred tons a day.

If there is anything which the British soldier cannot do, I should like to know what it is. Ours was not one of the pioneer battalions which is supposed to understand such jobs as this and draws extra pay for doing so. The men were just ordinary—which means extraordinary—soldiers, and they set about their work as though they had been quarrying all their lives. There were the rifles piled in ordered ranks on the ground below to prove that they were the servants of another trade, but they wrought with pick and shovel in expert fashion, and afterwards with hammer and drill, boring for the charges of blasting powder. The holes were filled and tamped, with the fuses in position, and we all went back to the camp to eat, to swallow large quantities of vigorously chlorinated water, and to rest in such shade as we could find through those midday hours when the sun seems determined to burn up all Macedonia. Only the engineer remained behind to light the fuses, and the only victim of the explosions was a sorrowful sheep which seemed to have made a hermitage for itself just above the place where we had been working. We found some of it when we went back

in the late afternoon. There is nothing at all to be said for Macedonian mutton.

Day by day the quarrying went on, and in the meantime one of the engineers had dressed himself carefully and gone in to Salonika to talk to people in authority. Presently he came back, and in his train came various interesting, useful things. Wagons began to roll up, carrying little trucks, lengths of rail, and more tools. By the time we had got a great pile of stone erected at the entrance to the quarry, another party was busy clearing a track down to the road half a mile away, fixing the rails to sleepers, cutting sidings, and generally making a most adequate little tramway. In less than a week the little trucks were running down the line filled with stone which was emptied into wagons at a cunningly contrived loading place and carted away north and south. The empty trucks were hauled back to the quarry by mules, and all day long the busy work went on, and the road took shape and form along the way which other toilers had prepared.

We learned many interesting things about the qualities of the stone of Macedonia in those days, when we left the quarrying to others and proceeded to become road makers. But first we learnt how the surface must be prepared before the stone was put on it. With pick and shovel we attended to it, first marking out the straight run of the road,

then clearing off all the scrub and grass which might be in the way, and next digging down at each side and making a careful slope up the center so that the camber might be all that could be desired.

Every few yards there were little drains to be cut so that the water might not lie under the surface of our road, and there was a ditch to be dug along each side of it. All the little gullies which crossed it had to be provided with drains—long wooden tunnels with big stones packed around them. For the protection of these drains it was necessary to build breakwaters across the gullies a couple of yards or so away, piling more big stones loosely together, so that when the storm sent a descending torrent some of the force of it would be broken and it would only be able to trickle gently through. Then, when all these preparations had been carried out, the road itself could be attended to and we wrestled with the piles of stone which the wagons had dumped by the side of it while the watchful engineers walked to and fro and saw that everything was done in the right way.

First came a layer of large pieces of rock, comfortable lumps as big very often as a man's head, till the whole surface was the most distressing processional way that any pilgrim of the past could have desired. The morning after a good stretch of that ferocious paving had been completed, we

found, when we went down to draw tools for the day's work, that each of us was to be furnished with a hammer. Then was made clear the difference between experience and inexperience. Those who were old at the game looked over the pile of hammers carefully, and chose little ones, stubbly little chaps with short, stumpy handles. Some of us, on the other hand, had enlarged ideas about our own strength, and a deal of sincere ignorance, and furnished ourselves with implements with which Thor might have been content. We had yet to learn that breaking stones is quite a scientific game, depending not at all on great muscles or mighty, smashing blows.

We went down to our road and scattered ourselves along it, each man before a pile of the rock that was waiting by the side, and set to work. It was very early in the morning when we arrived, but as the sun climbed higher, tunics came off and sleeves were rolled up and the bronzed faces were wet and shining, while the clatter of the hammers never ceased. Then did we foolish ones with the big hammers realize that to the stone-breaker the wrist is more important than the biceps, and while the little ones went tapping merrily on the beat of our preposterous weapons grew slower and slower and our piles of broken stone seemed never to increase. Four hours of breaking stone with a big hammer is enough to put any man out of con-

ceit with his own strength and to set him devising all sorts of straps and bandages for his tormented wrist.

But with a well-chosen little hammer it is a pleasant job, as I found later on. There is such satisfaction in the gradual increase of knowledge which teaches one at last the right place for the blow to fall and the exact amount of force required so that the stone shall be shattered into fragments of the required size; it is so comforting to attack a great piece of rock with repeated little blows till all its joints are loosed so that one sharp stroke at the right moment sends it tumbling in all directions. One can sit there, working away, dreaming of all sorts of remote and happy things. I know now why so many of those gnarled old men whom one used to find breaking stones by the roadside in England a quarter of a century ago were so placid and happy, looking out beyond the world with eyes that smiled. One can imagine many less secure refuges for a tortured heart and mind than a pile of stones by the wayside and a little hammer, with the high sun over all.

Well, we broke our rocks into little pieces, and scattered them over the surface of our road till all those big foundation stones were covered three inches deep. Above them we scattered earth that it might work in with them and bind them together, and the wagons began to pass to and fro

along the way we had made. It may not have been road-making according to the best modern ideas, but there at least was a highway, apt and adequate for the service of either peace or war.

CHAPTER III

THE SERES ROAD

ONE road there is in Macedonia which dominates all the rest. It is so much more important than the others—though many of them have great value and are indeed vital to the needs of the campaign—that it is frequently referred to without any mention of its name. So you may hear one man say to another, "Oh yes, that happened just by the twenty-fifth kilo." Everyone understands. To the uninitiated it might sound as if there was in all the country only one stone which marked twenty-five kilometers from Salonika, but every one who has been out for any length of time knows perfectly well that the Seres road is referred to, that long highway which runs from Salonika northeast to the Struma and then, after crossing the river, swings southward to Seres.

That road has played a big part in the campaign, and will continue to do so to the end. A glance at the map will show the reason. It is the one way of approach to a very considerable portion of the Struma front. All the men engaged on that

front must pass up the road to their work, and all their supplies of every kind must follow them along the same way. There is not a yard of railway available in this direction. It is true that men and material for the district commanding the mouth of the river can be taken round to Stavros by sea, but for the furnishing of the chief part of the line the Seres road is wholly responsible, and some knowledge of it is necessary to any clear understanding of the progress and difficulties of the whole adventure. Ignorance of the nature of the road has led to a great deal of misunderstanding in the past, and more has been expected of the Salonika armies than they could have accomplished.

Very many soldiers are introduced to the road as soon as they land. There is the day of disembarkation down there at the edge of the bay, and the march through the evil-smelling, badly paved town. For two or three days they wait at the base camp, going for short marches, finding out all the customs of the country, and learning not to expect the appearance of a portable church every time the ringing of numerous unseen bells heralds the appearance of a flock of goats. Then, if their division is on the Struma, they march out one morning northwards past Lembet on the first stage of their fifty-mile journey. And if they are fresh troops just out from England and have arrived in the summer they do not enjoy it at all.

They may get as far as Güvezne, fifteen miles out, in comparative comfort, but once they reach that spot and encounter the hills, their troubles begin.

It is all so new, so strange, and so very uncomfortable. There is the rising at painfully early hours in the morning so as to get well on the way before the heat becomes too fierce for marching. Then there is that terrible time in the middle of the day when one searches in weary despair for some kindly touch of shade, when the heat and the flies make sleep impossible, when the only thing with which thirst can be relieved is chlorinated water which seems, in those early days, to parch the throat and mouth. And in the evening, when it might seem possible to rest in the blessed relief of the cool twilight hours, there is the need to get up and press forward once again, coming in the darkness to camp in a strange place where no one can find the water supply, and the cooks take hours fumbling through the dark to prepare any kind of a meal. It needs an uncommonly stout heart to stand the strain of those initiatory days. The Seres road in summer can be very unkind even to seasoned troops accustomed to the country. For newcomers it is the most searching kind of test.

I have seen them so often, new drafts fresh from England, toiling hopelessly up those unending steeps, choked and blinded by the dust of the lorries and ambulances which are racing to and fro all the

time. All that they are feeling is written so plainly on their faces. They are so far away from home and all the beloved, accustomed things. Enthusiasm and love of adventure might have carried them triumphantly through some wild brief rush in France, but in this there is no adventure. Here is no glory, no swift conflict and immediate service. This is nothing but dull, unending toil, with all the pains of thirst and weariness in a strange and friendless land. Those are the hours when the weight of the pack becomes an intolerable burden to the young soldier, and the rifle seems a fiendish encumbrance devised with infinite skill to torment its owner. At that time everything tends to provoke a fierce, unreasoning anger. The shape of the head of the man in front appears to be utterly detestable, the carriage of the man on the left is a torment. We all know that hour, we who have learned the obedience of war and have had to pass through that flaming test to find the indifference to bodily discomfort, the disregard of hardship and fatigue which are the gifts which his life does at last bestow on the soldier. But it is very hard to meet that hour and the Seres road at one and the same time.

It is too much for some of them. They get permission to fall out, and their position is, if anything, rather worse than before. They are alone now, but still the journey must be completed. In

the days of training in England, to fall out on a march often meant a lift from some friendly carter, or perhaps a drink at some cottage door or a few apples—but here there is nothing. The lorries are pounding by, but they are much too busy to stop and collect people who are merely tired. There is no sign of any water, nor of any habitation of men. There is only the long road winding up the eternal hills, and all the burdens still remain to be dragged after the vanishing column.

And then, perhaps, the youngster realizes that he has been a fool. The others will have reached camp and food and drink and rest long before him. They will be taking their ease while he is still toiling on; when he arrives there will be no sympathy, but those who endured to the end will sneer at him, and officers will be demanding explanations. . . . I fancy that a great many men will put down the most painful hour of their lives to the account of the Seres road. Some of us, saved by strength or determination or sheer cross-grained temper, have managed always to keep our places on the march, and so know nothing of the misery which must surely come to the man who falls out, but I fancy that even we give thanks that it is not possible to march up that road for the first time twice over. Those who have been there will know what I mean.

But the Seres road is not content with torment-

ing newcomers and teaching them with exceptional severity that sharp lesson which every soldier must learn before he is a man made and approved. That is only one of its activities. It also contrives to be the greatest possible nuisance to people high in authority.

Fifty miles of an English road, running smoothly over a fine surface, with none but gentle slopes, is not such a very serious matter. If, for instance, the Seres road were such as that great highway which runs from London to Aldershot, it would be almost as good as a railway—better in many respects. Supplies could be whirled up to the front without difficulty, and the wounded could be brought back without pain. The swift lorries could hurry to and fro all day long; there would be no discomfort for the marching men. Given transport enough, an army of almost any size could be provided with all the material of every kind which it required, without any peril of delay. But this road of ours is worse than anything that there is to be found in England.

It would be hard to make a map on a scale large enough to do full justice to the difficulties which it has to encounter. The hills which lie in its way are the most resolute foes of traffic that any one could imagine. There is no simple matter of climbing up one long slope to the highest point at Lahana and then running pleasantly down on the far side.

It has to get across not one hill but an utterly mad tangle of hills. It climbs up and up, and then loses all it has gained in a wild dash downwards which brings it back almost to the level from whence it started, with all the work to be done over again. And this happens not once but, in seeming, endlessly, and almost the whole of its course is the most violent kind of switchback.

Its hills would be alarming enough if its surface were good, but the surface of the Seres road is atrocious. There is nothing in the least wonderful in the fact, nor is any one to be blamed for it. Everybody knows how our roads in England have to be petted and pampered if they have to bear much fast, heavy motor traffic. The most perfect surface gives way sooner or later under the constant strain and suction of the whirling tires, and repairs are going on all the time. The Seres road had to start with a surface a good deal worse than that of the ordinary macadamized road. It was made very much in the fashion which I described in the last chapter; indeed no other fashion was possible. It certainly existed before we came to Macedonia, but in those days most of it can have been no better than one of the ordinary native tracks of trodden earth. The army has labored over all the length of it and continues to labor, and will have to continue to do so, but what can you do with mere stones and

earth to defy the rushing wheels which cut and wrench and tear the surface as fast as it is laid down? It would take something made of ferro-concrete to stand the strain which that road must endure, week in and week out, all the time there is a gun on the Struma which has need of shells, or a man who must be supplied with food.

The rulers of the Army Service Corps may know how many lorries go up and down that road every day. I cannot pretend to any such knowledge. I only know that it is never free from the grimy, lumbering monsters. I have camped beside it for days at a time, and they were thundering past all the while. Between the convoys there will come the lighter ambulances. Sometimes there will be a battalion marching up with the long train of its transport grinding on through the inches of dust or mud; sometimes it will be a battery of artillery. All day long the road knows no rest; lights are flashing up and down it through all the night. Inevitably its surface is reduced to a condition which would drive an English motorist to suicide—and it is fifty miles long.

So all those people who wonder why Seres and Demir Hissar and Fort Rupel were not taken last summer must be referred to the Seres road for the answer. They must ask the drivers of the lorries; they must inquire from the sick and wounded who endured that journey down in the ambulances.

More fortunate than many, I was on the other side of the country when my time came, and I went very comfortably down to the sea in a hospital train, but friends of mine were carried down the road in the Red Cross cars, and I know what it meant to them. The most careful driving and the best springs in the world cannot save a broken body when the way is full of holes and stubborn upstanding rocks.

But the great point so far as operations on the Struma front are concerned is this, that in all your making of plans you are inexorably limited by the power of the road to bear your transport. Even if you had unlimited lorries at command, you could only get so many of them on to the road in a given time. The wear and tear, too, are frightful, and motors cannot last half as long as they would on an ordinary road. And of course the hills and the surface together cut down speed relentlessly, and the journey is a long, painful business.

Bearing these facts in mind, consider how vast are the needs of an army which is operating on an extensive scale. There will be many batteries, and all of them must be kept supplied with shells. A battery can blaze away in minutes ammunition which it has taken hours to bring up, and once your lorries are empty they must go all the way back before they can be refilled. In Sir Douglas

Haig's report on the Somme offensive he told how hundreds of miles of railway had to be laid down in preparation for that great move. We have only fifty miles of a disastrous road and no railways at all. Supplies, supplies and again supplies—that is the keynote of success for the modern army. As your transport is, so will your victory be. The highest skill, the greatest degree of valor, these will be useless unless the material you require is instantly ready to your hand. Deprive your battery of shells, and you had better destroy the guns before they fall into the hands of the enemy.

Shells for your guns and food for your men—these things are essential. And there are countless other articles almost as important. You must have barbed wire for your defences, and wood and galvanized iron and sandbags for your trenches. Bombs must be brought up and ammunition for the rifles. Tools of all sorts must be ready behind the line, and wherever the advance goes the supplies must follow it if you are to hold the positions you have gained. These statements are the merest commonplaces of war as it is waged today, but to appreciate the full force of them one needs to be sitting at the far end of the Seres road waiting for things to arrive.

Very wonderful country that is, up there just beyond Lahana, where the whole of the Struma plain is spread below and the great hills stretch

away to left and right, some clothed with trees, some bare and gray with the naked rock. If one could just sit and look at it, the prospect might appear to be altogether admirable, and one could find something of pleasure in the far prospect of Demir Hissar and the great mountains which rise beyond. But one has other business on hand. Down in that plain the Bulgar and the Hun are waiting, and we have to deal with them—and there are the miles of that atrocious, dominating road.

Some day perhaps the full story of the road will be told. I think it would take a driver of the A.S.C. and one of the R.A.M.C. to do it properly, with, perhaps, a chapter from one of those unhappy infantrymen I was writing about just now. Words alone would hardly be able to do it justice, so perhaps the cinematograph might be brought in to assist, and in time the people of Britain might understand something of what is involved in this campaign, how much there has been to do and to endure, how great have been the difficulties, how stern are the limitations. Whether or not the peculiar features of the road were fully realized when the adventure was planned is a question on which the future may possibly throw some light. But it is at least necessary and only fair that they should be generally understood now. The nation should know what manner of task that is which its soldiers are performing, lest there be a ten-

dency to judge without knowledge and to condemn without the evidence for the defence. Last summer the English newspapers were announcing the beginning of a great offensive on the Struma. It would have required several miracles and a few thousand magic carpets to have turned that offensive into anything like the mighty affair which it was to have been in the minds of the innocent and imaginative sub-editors who designed those trumpeting headlines.

CHAPTER IV

"PEACE-TIME SOLDIERING"

ACTIVE service from the soldier's point of view, is such a queer mixture of the real thing and of that other business which is contemptuously referred to as "peace-time soldiering." Our new armies are not fond of peace-time soldiering. The men put on khaki suits for the purpose of killing Germans, and they find it hard to understand why they should not be allowed to get on with that interesting business. Besides, it seems so very absurd to come across the sea to a place where war is actually going on and then to settle down to life in a camp where things are very much the same as they would be in England, except that minor luxuries are hard to come by and week-end leave is a thing of the past.

There is probably less of this irritating life in Macedonia than anywhere in the areas of the war, just because the roads need so much attention. In the early days everybody who was not digging trenches was busy on the roads. There was so much to be done, and labor was so scarce that the

army was set to navvying as a matter of course. But as the more urgent tasks were accomplished the hated, necessary thing came back and in the camps all over the country men found themselves doing once more the things which they had hoped they might be allowed to forget. For an army has many of the qualities of steel, and if it is to be of the greatest possible value when the time for using it arrives it must be kept keen and bright by constant polishing. If it is allowed to relax and grow slack, there is a peril that it will fail when the time of testing comes—and something more than drill is learnt on the parade ground.

One area there is in Macedonia where peace-time soldiering is specially possible and where it is carried out with a deal of energy. The troops which may happen to be stationed for a time on the Hortiack plateau have little to do in the way of road-making, and their commanders take good care that they shall have every chance of reviving the memory of the lessons learnt during the training in England. Indeed it is a kind of polishing station where divisions can be sent in turn to be smartened up and reminded that even if they are on active service, the man who comes on parade unshaven is a very dreadful criminal.

It is a good place for the beginning of one's experience of Macedonia. High above and to the east of Salonika Bay, the plateau rolls along for

miles to where Kotos, that excellent mountain, climbs into the sky. People who cherish dim memories of things learnt from geography books at school may be under the impression that a plateau ought to be flat, but there is nothing in the least flat about Hortiack. It consists of endless hills, and though they are not nearly so big as those which torment the Seres road, they are big enough to provide ample exercise for the men stationed among them. On the infinite variety of their slopes the camps hide coyly away, and it is no small adventure to be sent to that area to find any particular battalion. You may find all the rest of the brigade to which it belongs and still fail to discover the object of your search. There are those concealing hills on every hand, and nobody seems to know the exact spot you are seeking. And even when you have been there a week or two the troubles are not entirely at an end, and it is not safe to be too confident in the power of your sense of direction. It is better to keep an eye on the sun and to study landmarks and bearings before you set out to explore those complicated valleys.

Everywhere from end to end of the area one found the busy camps in the days when I knew the place. Remote though it might be from the actual fighting, there was plenty of the sound of war in the air. You see in those sudden little

valleys there is plenty of space for the more violent parts of training to be carried out without danger to other people, so a trench-mortar battery would be busy in one secluded dell, a grenade school in another, and a machine-gun class in a third. They would be banging away all day long as instructors toiled to perfect the pupils in the art of abolishing the King's enemies. And then, rounding a sudden bend you would come upon a broad, flat space where a battalion was drawn up on parade going through battalion drill just as it might have done in any park in England.

We had a camp which was built on nearly as many hills as Rome, and to get from the officers' lines to the mess involved the descent of one steep little hill and the ascent of another, while the duties of the orderly officer took him up and down stiff, slippery slopes all day long. But it was a fine place, and it was very good to live there, and to be able to sit in the evening looking out over the smooth water of the bay to where Mount Olympus stood, a beautiful, ghostly shape, sixty miles away. And in the bay there were the ships which had left England only a little while ago, and one did not seem so far away from home. There were other advantages, too. Hortiack—its proper name is Hortackoj but we never rose to that pitch of accuracy—is only seven miles from Salonika, and it was possible to get out supplies for the mess,

so there was never any lack of those little luxuries which do so much to make life bearable in distant lands. It was also possible to get into the town itself occasionally, though Salonika is not exactly the sort of place one would choose for a pleasure trip. Still it is a town, with shops and restaurants and crowds of people, and after a prolonged course of Macedonia one is grateful for very little.

There were times when we did not altogether appreciate our spell of peace-time soldiering. One day in particular will remain in the memories of some of us as long as we are capable of remembering anything. Some one in authority had evolved a tactical scheme on a large scale, and no one realized quite how large that scale was. We were quite accustomed to brigade operations which began at five in the morning and ended at eight, and we thought that customary program was to be carried out on this occasion and that we should all be back in time for breakfast.

We were ordered to parade at 4:45 a.m., so we were busy getting up soon after four, and even in summer time getting up at that hour on those hills is rather a chilly business. Somehow we groped our way on to parade and marched off. It was about two hours later that we realized that something very unlike the usual program was contemplated.

For we had marched and continued to march altogether in the wrong direction. There was no sign of a swinging round so that our faces might be turned towards home, and we began to wonder with a certain acute interest what time it would be when we got breakfast. So presently we came to the edge of the plateau and halted there, looking northwards over the quiet level of Lake Langaza to the tumult of the hills which lay between us and the Struma. We waited there for a long time, reflected that it was five hours since we had got out of bed, and remembered that in those latitudes no parades are supposed to take place in summer between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. It seemed reasonable to suppose that we should be sent home immediately, and that we must have completed our mysterious share of the operations.

But no one seemed inclined to send us home. Instead we were thrust out along the edge of a precipice and sent skirmishing back from it over large areas of Macedonia in its most untamed and riotous mood. It was blazing hot by this time, and most of us had got out of the habit of seeing that our water-bottles were always full. By the time we had reached and occupied the crest of a low hill looking towards our very distant home a number of men were sighing for a cosy corner in one of the trenches of France, and the rest were inventing suitable destinies for the general who

designed the scheme which we were carrying out. I heard a great many suggestions, but none of them were really adequate. After a little further baking on that ridge we moved forward again and occupied another hill. This time we were really getting nearer home, and things looked more hopeful, but the designer of the scheme was a thorough man, and he believed in doing things thoroughly. All at once we were switched off to take part in a wide flanking movement, which included the assault of three more hills, and then we were told that we might go. That last three miles back to camp nearly finished us. We reached the camp a little over ten hours after we left it, and there was hardly anyone who had had a mouthful to eat or drink since he tumbled out of bed.

I am not putting this forward as the classic instance of endurance, to be recorded in all military manuals hereafter forever as a standard by which all future achievement shall be judged. It was, of course, a mere nothing from the soldier's point of view, and that is just why I have written about it. For it seems rather a good illustration of the ease with which all sorts of men have adapted themselves to the soldier's life in these days of the nation's necessity. It is the kind of thing which has been done over and over again since the war began by tens and hundreds of thousands of people who before the war would never have dreamt that

it was possible to get up and work hard with their bodies for ten hours without food or drink.

If in the days of peace an employer of five thousand men had suggested that they should accomplish such a feat and had ordered them to do it, there would have been a strike on a large scale, and the employer would have been accused of incredible brutality. But there were many more than five thousand of us, and no one thought of accusing the responsible general of brutality, fervently though we cursed him at the time. We were in the army now and it was all in the day's work. We had learnt that we could do something which we had never thought of doing before; we had gained some information about the power of these bodies of ours to do and to endure without disaster and, indeed, without overwhelming discomfort. As soon as we got into camp we proceeded to learn something about their power to appreciate good food and drink. I have to confess that my share of the performance in the mess consisted of an ordinary lunch—it came first, because it was ready and waiting for us—followed by a very complete breakfast. Somehow it seemed a pity to miss a meal.

So our life went in those days at Hortiack. There was always plenty to do, and yet it was in its way a holiday. Also there were occasional amusements, not the least of which was provided by the

Greek muleteers. To drive some of the innumerable mules required to cart the army's luggage about the hills of Macedonia a number of Greeks had been employed. In addition to becoming acquainted with the mules, they were supposed to learn some drill, and a number of unfortunate sergeants had been told off to drill them. Those sergeants did not enjoy life very much. The first thing to be done was to find some one in the squad who knew enough English to translate the words of command, but the sergeant who cannot work off his characteristic sarcasms on his pupils is not likely to be very happy. Besides, the Greeks seemed to have an eternal objection to marching in step. They would go strolling along, with the sergeant bellowing his "Left, Right, Left," and the linguist of the squad making Greek noises to the same effect, but those muleteers took no notice. They did not even trouble to march in time. They sprawled over the ground with happy smiling faces and the most complete indifference to the noisy people who barked at them, and the Tommies stood round criticizing the performances while the sergeants perspired in ineffectual rage.

But there was a better thing than this: there was a band. How it came to be there no one seemed to know, but it lived somewhere among the little valleys, and it used to be sent round to give the various battalions a treat on rare, delight-

ful evenings. If you want to appreciate even a third-rate brass band, go to Macedonia for a few months. And this was quite a good band, and it played all sorts of tunes we knew and had been accustomed to hear at home in the days before there was a war, as well as some others which we were assured were the latest favorites and would certainly greet us on our return. The whole battalion would be aware of the fact that the band was going to pay us a visit three days before it was to come, and everybody was waiting for it when it arrived.

I remember the last of these excellent concerts which we had. It was in the hour before dinner, and the musicians had stationed themselves on the top of one of our numerous hills. Some one had sent over to the mess for some chairs, and there had come also a tray bearing bottles—sherry, vermouth, bitters and gin, those amiable liquids which do so excellently prepare the way for a meal. So we sat there and listened, and the men were all gathered round. Sometimes a familiar chorus would be taken up by a hundred voices; sometimes there was only the deep, appreciative silence, while the music flowed on. For a little while we were home again. We did not regard the sea below or the evening sky, or the far shape of Olympus, or any of those things which surrounded us. We were back among familiar scenes, and faces we knew

were shining at us. We moved in our own places and among our own people, and for a little while we were content.

CHAPTER V

MARCHING BY NIGHT

IT is not good to march in the daytime during the Macedonian summer. At times, of course, it has to be done, but whenever possible marches are made by night. There came a day when a party of us were ordered to proceed from Hortiack to Ambarkoj, and we paraded at five in the afternoon, left the camp behind, and came in time to the edge of the plateau looking down once more on Lake Langaza. The sun was setting as we reached the top of the hill; the long shadows were falling across the still water, and darkness was gathering round Ajvatli, the village which stands, remote from the world, on the southern shore of the lake. Between us and the village there ran two miles of one of the steepest hills that even Macedonia can show. We proceeded cautiously down into the darkness which seemed to flow upward to receive and cover us. Presently all that plateau which had been our home for a little while was far above us and out of sight as we worked cautiously down to the level of the lake—for it is necessary to pro-

ceed with caution when marching by night in such a country, even when a road is provided.

Newly-arrived troops often find that night marching extraordinarily difficult. They expect too much from our roads. They give them credit for being as the roads of England, and they are grieved when their feet come violently in contact with rocks, or sink into deep holes. Even if one knows the country and its ways it is an awkward business at first, but the human animal is wonderfully adaptable. How it happens I cannot tell, but in course of time one does learn the trick. The feet seem to develop an extra sense, and they find their way over all sorts of obstacles without disaster, so that in the end you can go adventuring over any kind of ground in safety.

But however sure on their feet the men may be, you can never be altogether certain what the transport will do, and going down steep hills by night is a strain to find out all the weak places. Our particular defect asserted itself before we had got half-way down. It lay in the pole which connected one half-limber with the other, and without warning it tore right out of its socket. Either the wood was faulty or it had been badly prepared. Whatever the reason, there was the crippled limber with half our stores on board, lying across the road, while its agitated mules were dancing the tango round it. A mule can always be trusted to

increase any unpleasantness which may arrive.

The main body had gone on ahead in happy ignorance of the disaster. I happened to be in command of the rearguard, so I was intimately concerned with the trouble for if we could not get the limber on it would be necessary to stay with it all night. That is one of the beauties of life in the rearguard. It is your business to clear up all the litter as you go, and not to move on without it.

By the time the mules had been dealt with and the extent of the damage ascertained, the position looked distinctly unpleasant. Limber poles do not grow on Macedonian hills. It might have been possible to send a man to steal one from a camp we had passed some four miles back, but that would have meant a delay of at least two hours and a half. But one does not need so very many weeks in Macedonia to learn the great, consoling lesson that the British Army will always see you through —always. Never yet have I known it to fail. Whatever the occasion, the man who can deal with it is there, and I knew that on this occasion, too, salvation must be somewhere handy.

It came in the shape of a fiery little company-sergeant-major who had been a transport sergeant in France and knew all about limbers and everything else. He came bustling up and I subsided into a kind of lay figure whose sole business it was to stand and hold an electric torch in the required

position while the little man obtained ropes from mysterious sources, performed strange deeds with them and the broken pole, and issued orders at the rate of fifty a minute to my command. He was the man of the moment, and I was quite content to hold the torch for him. You must never interfere with the army when it is getting you out of a tangle. If you do it may be flustered, or, worse still, offended. Just let it alone and wait till the work is done, and then events will resume their normal course.

So at the end of ten violent minutes the little man jerked himself upright and saluted. "Ready to carry on, sir," he snapped, and the procession lumbered forward and downward once more. Ten minutes later we met a panic-stricken member of the main body who had come back to look for us. When you are in charge of all the stores of a company, including the mess outfit, you are not likely to suffer from neglect.

If you pass within half a mile of it and can see it only by the light of the stars, one village is very like another all the world over, and that, perhaps, is why I have an idea that Ajvatli must be a very nice place. It seemed that it might have been a village in England. It was very quiet, with happy little lights shining here and there. It was a place of homes, and since one could not see them one could forget for the moment that the people were Macedonian and of uncouth habits. I never saw the

place again, so that dim picture remains, a very pleasant memory of our journey as we turned and made our way westward along the border of the lake.

That was good travelling—night marching at its best. There was no attempt at a road, but we went smoothly forward over thick, close turf. Thorn bushes grew here and there, but there was no obstacle in our way. On the right lay the smooth black water of the lake, and on the left the ground sloped gently upward to the secret darkness where lay the hills from whence we had come. The air was full of the incessant shrilling of the tree-frogs, but the bull-frogs in the lake had absolutely nothing to say for themselves, which was a comfort. There was once a man in the camp of some little detached post or other in Macedonia who was so pestered by the chanting of the bull-frogs in a pool close by that he arose at midnight and lobbed a Mills grenade into the middle of the concert. Most of the frogs were too dead to sing any more after that, but the camp was awake half the night trying to decide whether or not the remedy was worse than the complaint.

Just by the end of the lake it seemed good to halt for a little food, for it was ten o'clock, and we had another five or six miles to travel. We had not been halted two minutes before the merry fires were dancing at the spot the cooks had selected for their

operations, and by that sign you might have realized, had you been there and known the facts, that we were no new-comers in Macedonia.

For Macedonia is a country in which the betting is against your finding fuel at any halting-place. It is true that there are forests here and there, but trees are generally very scarce. In some places there are bushes and scrub, but very often the camp must be pitched on an open plain which grows nothing more substantial than thistles. That is the time when novices suffer, and especially at night. They search miserably and with pain all over the place and find in the end no more than a few handfuls of poor, thin stuff which makes a little blaze and flickers out, leaving the water as cold as ever, and the prospects of tea as dismally remote. But the old hands know better than that. Every bit of wood they pass on the march is collected. You will see men with long, rough sticks tied to their rifles and two or three more in their hands. Sometimes almost every man of a platoon will be carrying firewood, and when the halt is reached it is all handed over to the cooks. And on this occasion we had done better than usual. The last camp we had passed on leaving the plateau must have been the home of a very fresh and incautious unit, for they had stacked close beside the road a whole pile of bits of packing cases, than which there is no better or more desirable firewood. The temptation had been too much for our

boys, and of course we had seen nothing of what happened as we passed, and now their fuel was boiling the water of our tea at a splendid rate.

There was only one drawback to our position on the edge of the lake. From the water, attracted by the flames, came millions of tiny gnats and midges. There were very few mosquitoes, but even so it was an uncomfortable business for anyone who is not fond of eating gnats with bread and jam or of swallowing them in tea. But then Macedonia is no place for people who are too particular.

We went on again under the same quiet stars for mile after easy mile. There was no fatigue in that marching, nothing but a little reasonable weariness. The men did not sing. Indeed I heard very little singing on the march anywhere in the country, and none at all from our battalion. But they swung along happily enough, chatting and laughing; there was none of that dour silence which tells that the limits of endurance are being strained. From the distance came the little sound of guns, but whether from the Struma or the Doiran front it was not easy to say. We were too far away, and hills play queer tricks with sound.

At last the column halted. There did not seem to be any particular reason why it should halt. I think every one felt equal to a few miles more, but we had covered twenty from our starting-point and it was an order that we should rest. Some one who had come on ahead and arrived while daylight remained led the

different parties to their appointed camping grounds and told us where to find the water. Once again experience bore witness to itself. With newcomers the settling down for the night in the dark is a terrible business, and people are rushing to and fro for hours, but there was no fuss or delay with our men. Quietly and very quickly they made their arrangements with no need of supervision. Little fires sprang up along their lines and one could catch glimpses of them as they lay, some huddled together, some separately, smoking a final cigarette. But for us the day was by no means over. There were only the five of us, officers of the one company, and the mess president, aided and abetted by the cook, had decreed that we should have dinner when we arrived. Already the cook was very busy with pots and pans round his fire, and one of the servants was spreading a cloth on the ground and arranging packs round it for us to sit on. The company commander was trying to write some report or other with the aid of an electric torch, and swearing distressfully at the same time, when we became aware of an approaching radiance. It was another of the servants, bringing up the lamp to which we had treated ourselves during that little spell of luxury at Hortiack. A beautiful oil lamp it was, with glass and globe complete, and we had been very proud of it. But we imagined that it had been left behind. Glass chimneys and globes are not the sort of things to travel securely in limbers.

"Where on earth did you get that thing from?" asked our astonished commander.

"We just brought it along, sir," replied the man, and it took a whole string of questions to bring out the fact that one of the servants had carried the lamp, another the chimney and another the globe in their hands for the whole twenty miles. They had their rifles and all their equipment. They had also, you may be very sure, their share of the looted bits of packing cases, and yet they had brought these things all the way. The British Tommy is an incalculable person. Those three, it seemed, were as proud of that lamp as we had been. They wanted it to go shining vaingloriously over Macedonia and to fill the members of other messes with envy, so they "just brought it along," and they carried it afterwards over very many miles of that uneasy land, till misfortune and a thunderstorm met it at Lahana.

The air was utterly still, and the lamp looked very pleasant burning there so brightly under the stars with our cutlery arranged on the cloth around it. I have had dinner at some curious hours, but I don't think I had ever had it at two in the morning before, yet it seemed more like the end of the day than near the beginning, such was the magic of that pleasant night. And it was a very excellent dinner, for we had some store of our little luxuries, so there were soup, fish (out of a tin), stewed steak, peaches and coffee, and we had some whiskey and a few bottles of Perrier.

It is possible to be quite comfortable in Macedonia so long as you are near any source of supplies. The trouble is that you are usually so far from anything of the kind that it is only possible to dream of the things you would like to eat and drink and smoke.

But that was a special kind of night altogether, one of those happy times when all goes well. No one seemed in a hurry to go to bed, and when at last I lay wrapped in my blankets under the stars, it seemed almost a pity to go to sleep. The tree-frogs were rioting in an orchard of pomegranates, figs and apricots just behind me, but there was nothing unpleasant at that hour in their shrill calling. The North Star was lower in the sky than it had any business to be, but there was the sense of certainty that presenly I should reurn to my home and all those things from which I was parted for a little while. The distant guns were whispering through the air, but they only spoke of that day when peace shall surely come again to visit and dwell upon the earth.

Far beyond me rose the line of the Seres road and there were the lights of the ambulances as they came rushing down with their burden of broken men.

CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING WATER

THERE are quite a number of riddles to be solved when troops are moving about Macedonia, and the most constant of them all is that of the water supply. There is plenty of water in the land—in winter there is far too much—but it hides away in the most irritating fashion, and it has a habit of running in undesirable places. Water usually means mosquitoes, and it is necessary to avoid mosquitoes as far as possible if we are to have any army left in the country.

In summer most of the rivers dry up. If they are really large and important rivers they may keep a little trickle of water running, but it is hardly more than a trickle. The Galika, for instance, is quite an imposing affair when rain is falling. Frequently it cannot be content with one channel but carves itself out two or three in addition to turning wide areas into swamp. But when summer comes it dries up to such an extent that only the scantiest driblet of water connects the little pools which remain to mark its course. There are, on the other hand, a few little streams among the

mountains which flow fairly steadily all the time, but these are usually fed direct from springs.

The springs themselves are curious. A geologist would probably find all sorts of interesting things in the country if he were to visit it, and work out the connection between all these little underground rivers. It is certain that there must be a whole series of such hidden streams. Over and over again one finds springs which well out of the rock, tumble into a little age-worn basin, and vanish. There is nowhere any trace of a stream. The water comes into the light of day for a moment and slips away out of sight. Very probably it comes flowing out from under another rock miles away, pretending that it comes from an entirely different spring. It would be interesting to go round the country with a few gallons of Condy's fluid, treating these vanishing springs to a dash of color, and then watching to see where the decoration reappeared.

Certainly this vanishing habit has made things very awkward for the army. Spring water, when it comes direct from the filtering rock, is usually pure and fit for drinking. Especially at times of stress and emergency, there would be a tendency to allow the drinking of such water without restrictions. But when it is realized that what appears to be a spring may be merely a mouth of a subterranean stream, it is another matter. Higher up in its course that same stream may have rippled through the filth of a Macedonian village. Its water may be loaded with micro-organisms which will

do terrible things to the stomach of the soldier and render him useless to the army for months. When these things were realized the authorities began to take the water-supply of Macedonia very seriously indeed, and the various medical officers were told that they must be very careful about it. For that, if for no other reason, I should hate to be a Medical Officer.

The battalion tramps into a new camp, hot and dusty from a long march and very, very thirsty. Theoretically, a supply of guaranteed water should have been brought on from the last halt, but that theory breaks down sometimes. There are the crowds of exceedingly thirsty men, and there is a beautiful, clean-looking spring. Between the two stands the M.O. with a nasty little case full of tubes and bottles and similar rubbish, and proceeds to make a test. That test takes half an hour to accomplish.

Of course we know that it is necessary. Any man with any sense will admit as much, especially when he is not thirsty. We know that there may be perils innumerable lurking in that innocent water, and most of us have been too near to dysentery at one time or another since we came to the country to desire any closer acquaintance. But one is apt to be unreasonable after twenty miles of Macedonia, if the sun has been shining most of the time. Egged on by the craving body, the brain forgets its caution and hints that even if there is a bit of risk the odds are against anything happening, and anyhow the water looks per-

fectly good—any one who has ever been in a similar position can imagine the course of that mental disturbance.

So quite naturally there arises a hatred and scorn and loathing of the Medical Officer. He is seen to be a pedant of the worst type, a bigoted follower of the rule of thumb, a person without discernment or power of independent thought. Moreover he is not content with keeping us waiting. Not content with testing the water, he must needs be chlorinating it. His minions throw evil powders into it, so that the good sweet water becomes vile and an offence to the palate. We can even taste it in the tea, and we spend a hearty half-hour in reviling science, and above all, its nearest exponent. Yes, I am quite sure that I do not want to be a Medical Officer.

But even this chlorinating business is not the whole of the trouble. It does quite frequently happen that there are two springs to serve the camp, one near at hand and disreputable, and the other far away and tolerable. The doctor decides that the water from the far spring must be used, and immediately earns some more unpopularity. He is unpopular with the men who are told off to guard the forbidden spring and have to stay there all day long scaring thirsty people away. He is unpopular with the men in charge of the water mules who have to keep tramping to and fro for a mile, or it may be a mile and a half, to bring water for the varied needs of the battalion. And more than

ever is he unpopular with those who are told that they cannot have any water yet because the mules have not come up. Any man who goes looking for popularity is a fool, but a man who is compelled to attract such an amount of unpopularity is to be pitied, whatever his faults may be. Yet these things have to be done, that His Majesty's forces may deal the more effectually with His Majesty's enemies.

When drinking water has been arranged for there still remains the business of washing, and this is frequently quite as difficult a question. Really there are times when one cannot understand how our men in Macedonia contrive to keep so clean. It is bad enough for an officer. Requiring a tub he sends his servant off to find some water. Having no more than two hands, the man cannot well contrive to bring more than two canvas buckets back with him, and quite possibly he has had to carry even that amount nearly a mile. With a couple of buckets of course one can do something. Even half a bucket will go quite a long way if you are careful with it, but there is no solid satisfaction in such a tub. At the best it is only a makeshift.

But if the officer with his buckets finds the problem difficult, how does the soldier manage? He has no bucket. Most probably the only available water is in a mean little stream which he must share with a few hundreds of his comrades. With that meagre supply he must do all his washing and shaving, and also wash his clothes. Whether there is another army in the

world which would keep clean under the circumstances I do not know; probably most of them would not even try, but our men try, and succeed.

Outside of Salonika I only found one place in Macedonia where one could get a real bath. That was at the standing camp of Janes. Having a plentiful supply of water, the officers of the camp decided to fix up a place for washing, and they did it well. There are big tubs in which one can wallow with extreme joy, and there are showerbaths as well. Places are provided for men as well as for officers, and there is a separate department for washing clothes. When in our wanderings we halted by that camp for a time and were informed that we might use the baths the battalion nearly went mad with joy, and there was a waiting list for every bathing parade, while clothes were being washed all day long.

Yet if proper baths were scarce, it was occasionally possible for people who were really interested in the matter to clean themselves thoroughly. It all depended on their power of using their opportunities to the best advantage.

We came one day to a camp which was pitched in the middle of a hot, blistering plain. There we remained for five days. In the morning and the evening we did short marches or a little drill, but through all the scalding hours of the middle of the day we could do nothing but lie in our bivouacs and gasp for breath. It happened that on our second day in the

place I found a quiet little stream, and I mentioned the fact to one of the others who had been in the country a few months longer. Without asking any more questions he sent his servant for a couple of shovels, and when they arrived, commanded me to lead him to the place.

The stream ran in a bed which it had carved for itself at the foot of some tall cliffs. They were so high and followed such a course that the blazing sun could not reach that little rivulet of water, but it flowed very happily in the cool shadow. It was quite a tiny affair, nowhere more than three inches deep, and at the widest it was not more than three feet across. But we had those shovels, and our own intense desire for a bath.

It is as well to remember that, however small a stream may be, it is bringing down fresh water all the time and will eventually fill up any cavity it reaches and sweep away all the mud you may stir up. We set to work with those shovels and began to dig great holes right in the bed of our little stream.

It made a vast commotion. We were throwing gravel and mud and stones to left and right. All the little minnows swam away in terror, and a crab which we disinterred made frantic attempts to hide itself under a rock, but we went on scooping and scraping and excavating, always with a careful eye on our own dimensions. If you buy a ready-made house you have to be content with the baths which the builder has

installed, unless you are very rich and can afford to have them replaced by your own size in baths. But if you make your own bath you can make it to fit yourself. You can make it long and broad and deep enough, and to prevent mistakes you can try it on while it is being made.

So we dug our baths, and the stream brought us down an incessant supply of fresh water. A very few minutes after we had finished our scraping and shovelling we had each a great, clear pool, and we proceeded to enjoy ourselves. It is a great experience to sit in water up to your neck when for months you have had to make shift with a sponge. And the experience is more wonderful still when you know that outside your little patch of shade there is the tormenting heat of the sun at noon. We sat there for hours, revelling in the caress of the cool water, jumping out now and then to bask in the sun, and returning once more to the touch of the running stream. When at last we returned to the camp it was with the consciousness that we were thoroughly and effectually clean, and we felt very superior to all the unfortunate people who had not known what it was to steep themselves in real water for months.

Our superiority was short-lived, of course. Others found that secret little stream, and we had no copyright in the bath-digging idea. Two days later the stream was a series of holes and in every hole a soldier splashed and soaked and smiled. The only advantage

that we gained was that, being the first on the scene, we were allowed to keep our places at the head of the stream and so were not obliged to wallow in the mud and soap-suds sent down by other people.

But if you want a hot bath in Macedonia there is only one thing to do. You must contrive to get so ill or so badly hurt that you are sent into hospital.

CHAPTER VII

OUR HOUSES AND TIN

WHEN one is young the snail often appears to be an enviable beast. It seems such a jolly idea to wear your house on your back, and to be able to move without difficulty into the next street every time the neighbors start disliking you. It is a pity that we have to grow up and put away childish things. If they only retained that youthful envy of the snail the soldiers of the Salonika armies would be quite happy about the fact that they actually do carry their houses on their backs, but they are adult and disillusioned men, and I did not meet one who was really glad to have realized that dream.

To be sure our houses had little in common with the snug, weather-proof residence of the snail. They consisted simply of bivouac sheets, together with such sticks or other supports as we could manage to acquire in the course of our wanderings. A bivouac sheet is a piece of material furnished with eyelet holes, buttonholes and buttons, and it is theoretically rainproof. Many things which are supposed to be rainproof lose their reputations when they are exposed to Macedonian

storms, and anyhow our sheets had seen plenty of active service and they were getting tired of it. They were not even showerproof.

Each man carries a sheet, and when a new camp is reached he conspires with a comrade to make a house. Architecture is a simple matter. Two uprights are driven into the ground and a cross-bar lashed to the top of them. Over this the two sheets are flung buttoned together so as to make one long sheet. The free ends are pegged to the ground, and the result is a little triangular canvas tunnel in which two men may lie side by side or one, if he is very careful, may sit upright. If the two try to sit upright at the same time the house usually falls down. The edifice is, of course, open at each end unless they are very short men who can afford to leave enough to lap over and join at one end, when the place becomes a cave instead of a tunnel. Old soldiers learn in time the trick of acquiring an extra sheet, and with three sheets between two men a very tolerable little place can be made, but there is the disadvantage that some one has to carry the extra sheet.

The officer is, of course, a little better off. He is not compelled to share his tunnel with anybody else, and the number of sheets which he owns is only limited by the ingenuity of his servant or the weight of his kit. Also he does not have to construct the house himself—though many officers find it necessary to lend a hand, for the really good servant is a rare bird. But

in all other respects he is on terms of perfect equality with the men, and if a storm arrives he is as thoroughly soaked as any of them. He, too, has to solve the problem of turning over in bed without wrecking his home. He, too, must abandon dignity when he wants to go indoors and enter crawling warily on hands and knees. And when the occasional whirlwind approaches, he, too, must cling to his dwelling, and hold on with might and main lest the whole affair go dancing over the crest of the local mountain to hide in some remote valley.

For a real house rock is, of course, an admirable foundation, but it is quite another matter when you are trying to raise an erection of canvas and sticks, and the fact that Macedonia is largely composed of rocks is not the least of the troubles of the bivouac builder. The uprights and the pegs cannot be driven into the ground. There may be a thin layer of soil, but it is not enough to hold them if it begins to blow, and you are painfully conscious that the whole affair is ready to collapse at the first opportunity. You go round it, tenderly and lovingly, seeking to strengthen it where you may, but when all is done the thing is as frail as a card castle. But the ingenuity of the British soldier is unfailing. Once in the days of my ignorance I had been putting up my bivouac by myself and striving valiantly to drive home-made pegs into marble of superior quality. My servant had been delayed, but when I was perspiring irritably and trying to think

of appropriate things to say, he appeared and took charge of the situation. Instead of trying to drive pegs into the ground, he organized a system of anchors. The uprights were stayed by cords fastened round great lumps of rock. More lumps of rock took the place of pegs, until the whole was made generously secure, and he went about the task of arranging the furniture with an honest endeavor to hide his opinion that I was a foolish person who should never have been allowed so far away from home. I left him to it, and went away to watch where the shells were bursting along the ridge of a little hill just by Doiran. When I returned the place was ready for me to take possession.

Camp furniture in Macedonia is rudimentary. In England the newly-gazetted subaltern buys many beautiful things made of wood and Willesden canvas. If he is wise he leaves them in England; if he carries them as far as Salonika he will have to leave them there. Camp beds, baths, tables and chairs are pleasant things to own, but there is not enough transport to carry them round the country. He will be firmly discouraged if he tries to take with him anything but a canvas bucket.

Even so, a great deal can be done to make a bivouac look like a home; it all depends on the sort of servant you find. Mine was a very wonderful person. He would set out the shaving tackle, the two or three books, and the other scanty odds and ends, all ar-

ranged on boxes which he always seemed able to find. Somehow (one does not inquire into these matters) he acquired a big piece of canvas and stitched it up into a long bag which he stuffed with dry grass and made into a most admirable mattress. And also, wherever we went, he had a knack of discovering sheets of corrugated iron wherewith to enlarge and strengthen the sides of the house. That is the final proof of the expert in Macedonia—the power to find corrugated iron when no one else can find any. It is the most desirable substance. If you can find enough of it, you can make yourself a dwelling into which the rain cannot enter, which the wind will not greatly disturb. You can make a little palace for the mess and arrange shelter for the cook-house so that the weather will not disturb the due order of the meals. Given enough corrugated iron—known throughout the country and in all the rest of this book as "tin," you can make yourself really comfortable.

In the beginning I suppose the tin came to Salonika addressed either to the Engineers or to the Army Service Corps (to whom the good things of life do habitually and automatically address themselves). Probably it was sent out by trustful people in official positions who imagined that it would all be used for holding up the sides of trenches, aiding in the construction of bomb-proof shelters, or building stores for perishable goods and, perhaps, little huts for favored brigadiers. But when the army started housekeeping on those hills

and found that there were to be no tents because they were too heavy to be carried about, it began to realize the possibilities of tin. Ever since then the Engineers and other people who have some sort of official right to the stuff have been finding themselves compelled to send for more, and yet more of it, for their stocks do so consistently and mysteriously vanish.

You cannot hide a store of tin from battalions who have been long enough in the land to learn the value of it. Some one will ferret out the secret, and those precious sheets will vanish. Once we were camping among the hills, far enough from everywhere and every one for three weeks. Soon after our arrival we discovered three miles away a little hut which seemed to have been put up at some time or other as a signal station. All we were concerned about was that no one had been left to take care of it, and a couple of limbers very quickly transferred it to our camp where it was re-erected and made a very superior mess for our company. At the end of three weeks we had to go off on trek, on another spirited attempt to find the war. We knew that we should only be gone a little while, so we took the hut to pieces and hid the sheets, as we thought, quite cleverly. We were gone just a week, and when we returned every strip of tin had vanished, but down in a valley a mile away the officers of a detachment of pioneers offered us hospitality in a hut whose roof and walls were entirely familiar. It is a little difficult to accuse your hosts of stealing your

house, especially when you stole it yourself in the first place. The only remedy open to us was to find and annex another stack of the precious sheets.

The result of this blending of tin and bivouac sheets is to give the average camp a terribly disreputable appearance. I reached the land from England by way of Egypt. In Egypt we had had all the tents we needed, and our camps looked very nice out there on the edge of the desert. It had not occurred to us that you could have a camp without tents. They were as much a matter of course as the adjutant or the battalion postman. But when I reached the camp among the Macedonian mountains there was a revelation waiting for me. Not one tent was to be seen anywhere. There were only the rows of the tiny bivouacs, and the orderly room and the mess and all the other important places were just huts built of rusty corrugated iron, looking for all the world as if they had strayed out of a patch of allotment gardens at home. The whole affair looked so shabby that one wanted to go off and apologize to somebody for it.

But presently bugles were calling down the lines and the men came out, and presently the battalion was on parade. They stood there in shirt-sleeves and khaki shorts, the summer drill order of the Salonika armies. Their arms and their bare knees were burned as brown as their faces, and their equipment was frayed and worn but easy-fitting, and worn with an accustomed air. When they marched off they went with the care-

less, confident swing of men who have learnt to disregard the miles, who have learnt and are masters of their trade. And one realized that the peculiar appearance of the camp had nothing whatever to do with the business, that this curious cross-bred product of a gipsy caravan and a market garden was the home of real soldiers.

Later one learnt how swiftly those curious camps of ours could be struck and pitched again. Pitching a camp in England was always such a long, laborious business. The lines had to be marked out with infinite care, and the tents could only be raised with the aid of all sorts of sergeant-majors and similarly authoritative persons. But with these queer little canvas houses and these perfectly trained men, there was no confusion, no delay. Ordered to move off, each man packed his share of his dwelling in his valise with the rest of his goods. Ordered to halt and encamp, the bivouacs rose as by magic in neat, comely ranks and their inhabitants proceeded to make themselves at home.

Of course it often happened that we reached the camping ground too late, or were to stay there too short a while to put up bivouacs, and then every one slept in the open with only the sky for a roof. It is a very excellent way of sleeping, but there are just two drawbacks. In the first place, the sun does occasionally get up before the soldier needs to rise, and he awakens all the myriad insects of the land which in

their turn proceed to arouse every sleeper within their radius. And in the second place it does sometimes begin to rain in the night, and a man who can sleep with drops of rain pattering on his face is a bit of a curiosity among such a roof-sheltered race as ours.

In winter, of course, things are very different, but then in winter the troops are not moved about the country with the apparently aimless gaiety which is the rule in summer. They stay long enough in one place to make more enduring habitations, and there is a great digging and building as dug-outs and shelters are prepared. On the line between Salamanli and Dudular there are some wonderful dwellings to be seen, carved into the side of a cliff, and fitted with doors and windows, and photographs of these and similar luxuries have appeared in the papers from time to time. But I have never yet seen a photograph to illustrate the accident which befell a friend of mine down by Jerakaru. His dug-out had been constructed without sufficient study of the habits of the local floods. It was a nice dug-out, with a good, high sleeping shelf, and he was very proud of it. But there came a night of rain, and in the morning when he awoke he found that he had the option of staying in bed till the flood subsided or taking a plunge into about four feet of icy water in which all his possessions were swimming disconsolately round his home. That is the kind of thing which is liable to happen to any one stationed on low-lying ground in the rainy months, and to be flooded

out of your camp is just a part of the routine. If it does nothing else it adds to the appreciation of the rum ration.

CHAPTER VIII

RATIONS AND THE DUMP

GOING to the war in Macedonia is not an exciting business, because there is so much Macedonia and so little war. There are not many of the quick alarms which are supposed to haunt the soldier day and night. It is true that the guns keep pounding away, but there is so much room for the shells to fall and burst without hurting any one. Even on patrol actions, those nocturnal amusements of the people on the Struma, the man who gets hit is usually more astonished than anything else. A party of our men had been out doing some searching of the ground on the other side of the river one day last summer. They had had a few shots fired at them, but no one had been touched, and they returned at last to their defences and the officer in charge of them found his company commander having tea at the door of his dug-out. He sat down, with his back towards the river, to have a cup and to make his report. Suddenly he rose to his feet. "I'm hit," he said quietly, and walked off to the dressing station,

while the others stared. But it was quite true. Some enterprising Bulgar far away on the other side of the river had fired a shot at random, high in the air; it had caught him in the back, and gone clean through his body, and when I went to see him in hospital he was still puzzling over it. "Just think of it!" he said. "I was through some of the hottest of the shows in France in the first year and never got a scratch, and now I get plugged while I'm sitting down having tea! What can you call such rotten luck as that?"

Whatever else you may call it, it does not seem much like war as we have known it on the Western front. It is just the kind of irritating thing which does happen in Macedonia, and it is hard to say anything else about it. He had not even the consolation of being hit in the ordinary course of duty, and he was intensely annoyed. And that mood of intense annoyance is one which becomes very familiar after a few months in the country. It seems so desperately futile. There is the war to be attended to. One joined the army and learnt numerous strange lessons in the hope of being allowed to help to attend to it. One came to this exceedingly uncouth land in great joy, feeling that at last the chance had come and that all the many months of training were to have their fulfilment. Also one is in the presence of the enemy. It is possible to sit, as I have sat many a day, on the

hills above the Struma and look at Bulgars through field-glasses. Those are the people whom it is one's business to vex, to harass, and destroy. Back in the camp are the keen-eyed, eager men with their carefully tended rifles and their sure, steady hands and their constant burden of ammunition, and they, too, are annoyed, for nothing is given them to do but to make roads, to dig trenches, and to put up barbed wire in places which it does not seem humanly possible that the enemy can ever reach. We all appear to be as remote from the task we wanted to undertake as when we were still in England, and perhaps our annoyance is not to be wondered at. Swords may not have been beaten into ploughshares in Macedonia last summer, but bayonets were pretty generally put aside for pick-axes, to the intense disgust of their owners. Of course we knew nothing of the plans of the higher commanders. We could only see the things within the circle of our own horizon; we could only note what happened to us from time to time and draw our own conclusions from those happenings. Every now and then some order would come which seemed to indicate that at last we were going to fight, and we would forget to be annoyed for a little while. But in a very few minutes some pessimist would come along with the remark which we learned to hate and to dread more than any other arrangement of words—"The A.S.C. say that

if we do advance, they can't feed us." That sentence was the passing-bell of our hopes over and over again, and when we read in papers sent out from home that we were sure to do something before long, we used to say it to ourselves once more, and subside into blasphemous silence.

In every matter save that of food and ammunition we were, I suppose, as mobile a force as any leader could desire. The Salonika armies understand moving about with the least possible delay. Trained to the country, accustomed to march as well by night as by day, carrying our houses on our backs, we needed only to be fed and to be supplied with ammunition. But that was the difficulty, and the conclusion of the whole matter.

Wherever he goes the soldier takes with him his emergency ration, the little tin of meat, the other little tin which contains tea and sugar, and the handful of biscuits. He carries these things about with him, but he does not eat them. Somewhere or other in my kit is a much-traveled tin of bully beef that has been to see all sorts of queer places in Egypt, has wandered over most of the map of Macedonia, and visited quite a number of hospitals on the way home, and that is the proper way to treat an emergency ration. All the time you have it you know that you are assured against starvation, so you must keep it and never eat it, under pain of dreadful penalties, for it is only de-

signed to last for one day, and when that is over you are finished altogether.

If some one could invent a new kind of soldier who could carry with him a week's supply of food in addition to all his other tackle, we should have a new kind of war immediately, but as it is, the man must be within reasonable distance of his supplies. And that means that wherever he goes there must be a dump somewhere fairly close behind him. If you are told to proceed to any new place, the first question is always "Where is the dump?" Water can always be found somewhere or other, and you have the doctor with his box of tubes and powders to make it fit for you to drink. Fire and shelter you can provide for yourself out of what you may find and the burdens which you carry, but unless you can find a dump you will be lost. For as I have pointed out in an earlier chapter, it is not possible for an army to live on the land in Macedonia.

A dump, as its name more or less indicates, is a place where things are dumped. It consists, to the outward eye, of a collection of tents and marquees which live in a constant whirling confusion of motor lorries and limbers. In the marquees and around them are mountainous piles of packing cases and other matters which are constantly being built up and do as constantly melt away and vanish, while between them agitated men run to and fro

with little note-books, pencils and bits of carbon paper. You might not think as you stood watching their frenzied evolutions that they were engaged in winning the war, but that is very literally and exactly their business in life, and they are doing their best to carry it out.

Really it is time that people stopped throwing bricks at the Army Service Corps, and I say so with the more sincerity because I have thrown a few myself in my time. It is true that they always have the best kind of jam in their messes, and that they never run short of Ideal milk. It is true that they usually manage to keep themselves supplied with fresh meat, that their teeth are unaccustomed to wrestle with biscuits while there is a loaf of bread in the land, and that ration rum reaches them in generous measure—but is there one among us all who would not take similar care of himself if he had half a chance? When I was in the ranks we used to sing insulting ballads to A.S.C. men whenever they appeared, such as—

> "With the Middlesex in the firing line
> And the Queen's in support behind them,
> But when we look for the A.S.C.
> I'm hanged if we can find them."

In these and other ways we did our best to explain our deep conviction that the A.S.C. had noth-

ing whatever to do with the war, that they were pampered aristocrats who dwelt in luxury and idleness among the jam tins far behind the line, and did nothing all day long but conspire together to rob the poor soldier of his rations. But no one who has been in Macedonia for any length of time is likely to perpetuate those insults, even in jest. We are more likely to give thanks that it was not our fate to get into their ranks, and to pay them a very honest tribute of admiration and gratitude.

This is a digression, but it was necessary. And now it might be as well to return to the dump, and to explain just what those agitated men have to do. Obviously it would be a complicated business to send out motors from Salonika every day with the stores for the separate units which have to be supplied. It is much easier to send out the stuff in bulk and to distribute it as close to the line as possible, and for that purpose the dump is established.

A place is chosen which has to satisfy three conditions. The first is that it must be connected with Salonika by the best available road, so that there may be the least possible delay in keeping it supplied with stores. The second condition is that it must be as close as possible to the advanced line of troops, and the third that it must be in a position which can be reached easily and safely by the units which it is to supply. When such a spot

has been found the preparations are made and the tents and marquees are put up. Lorries come trundling over the skyline laden with all those things which go to make up the meals of the soldier on active service, together with the food for the innumerable mules and for the occasional horse. As it comes up each lorry hurls out its load of packing cases or sacks or bales, and they are received by busy, grimy men and piled in the positions ordained for them while the lorries trundle back for more. There rises a mountain of the meat which journeys to the front in tins. Close by will be arranged a pile of huge sections of dead animals decorously arrayed in sackcloth, while sacks of onions and potatoes close at hand suggest the army's affection for stew. A little further on will be the cases of condensed milk, tea, sugar and jam, and all the time bread will be arriving from those excellent bakeries which are hidden in the little valleys round Salonika. Scattered among the chief mountains will be the lesser mounds of those various small delicacies which are given to us from time to time for the greater comfort of our bodies and the increased valor of our souls.

Having got all these nice things so nicely arranged, and having written a great deal about them in his little books, you might think that the A.S.C. man deserved to be allowed to sit down and admire the result for a little while, but he is not permitted

such luxury. A dump is not a museum. Before the last lorry has got rid of its load, the empty limbers are rattling down from the opposite direction, bringing with them men armed with documents and desires. They come from the big camps, and from remote secret places where little detached parties are busy. They come on behalf of the men in the front line trenches, and of those others who are stealthily constructing works on distant, hidden hillsides. The documents support their claim to rations for so many men and animals. They are checks which must be cashed in meat and bread and fodder.

There are printed works on the subject of rations. In those works you may learn exactly what the soldier has a right to receive, what must be given to his mule, and what are the demands of a charger of over sixteen hands. If you gave me all those works and a pencil and a great many sheets of paper and left me alone for half an hour, I might be able to tell you at the end of the time what should be given to a man who demanded, say, sustenance for a hundred and fifty men and seventy mules. But the A.S.C. man is a professional. He has been at the job a long time and he knows the answer to all the sums, nor does he need to work them out. He glances at the document which each man brings and gives his orders, and the cases fly into the empty limbers

till they are subdued and sluggish under the weight, and crawl thoughtfully out on the way home.

It is a dizzy, bewildering business watching a dump when everything is going at full pressure. There will be a string of motor lorries for some big, distant camp, threading through the mounds of stuff and taking toll from each. Mixed with them will be the limbers, the puzzled, rebellious mules, and the men whose uneasy business it is to control the mules. Everyone is working very feverishly and the whole looks like unreasonable confusion. But as a matter of fact there is no confusion; it is all going quite smoothly, and everybody knows what he is doing.

For wise battalions—and most battalions acquire wisdom after a little time in Macedonia—do not send novices to the dump. The novices certainly get the things they were sent for, because they hand in their documents and the A.S.C. men do the rest, but men accustomed to the job sometimes get better stuff. If, for instance, there is only a limited supply of fresh meat, and the rest of the day's issue must be bully beef, the old hand can frequently throw in a word which will obtain the fresh meat for his unit. Undisturbed by the tumult, knowing exactly what he wants and what he is entitled to have, he makes his way round the marquees and does obtain, within the limits, the pick of the available stuff.

Satisfied at last the limbers go rolling and bumping back through the valleys and over the hills to their homes where the load they carry must be shared out, so much to each company, so much to the transport, so much to the officers. It is quite certain, of course, that everyone will grumble. The army always grumbles, but it is so much a habit that no feelings are hurt and the injured expressions do not reveal any genuine or deep-rooted discontent. And really there is not often much to grumble about.

It is all very simple, of course, and there are the times when the day's rations will consist of very little but a tin of bully, biscuits, tea and sugar, but even then there may be jam, and there is a deal of excitement to be gained out of the business of eating one of those biscuits with jam unless your teeth are in absolutely first-class order. One learns in a very little while to regard the absence of butter with indifference, and I fancy that quite a number of our men will come back protesting against the milk which comes direct from the cow and demanding instead those brands which come from the grocer's in tins. The one thing which we did miss and urgently desire was sauce—all kinds of sauce. If you can treat bully beef to a dash of Worcester or something of that kind it goes down so much better, and this is a hint which anyone with friends or relations in the Salonika

forces may take. If you are making up parcels, include something which will give a zest to plain fare, sauces, relishes, pickles—all such articles will be more than welcome.

CHAPTER IX

HEAT AND SOME ANIMALS

WHEN the war is over and those of us who are left come back once more and meet together and talk over our experiences there is likely to be some comparing of hardships and discomforts endured. For my own part I think that it is possible that those who were through the first winter in France and the first year of the campaign in Mesopotamia really had the worst of it. But we have known a little about discomfort in Macedonia too. There is a place called Güvezne. . . .

Güvezne is a village, but for army purposes it gives its name to a considerable tract of country round—country which is not far from being the most detestable in the whole land. It is a wide plain lying between the hills that rise behind Salonika and those others which the Seres road has to cross on its way to the Struma. The road runs across this plain for a distance of several kilometers, and as one marches up the views to left and right—and especially to the right—are discouraging. All that one can see in summer is

the expanse of parched, unhappy ground sweeping away to the distant hills. There are no trees, nor is there any kind of shelter from the blazing heat of the sun. The ground bears a little wretched grass, and a great many thistles, and nothing else at all, unless one counts the myriad lizards as a kind of secondary crop. It is all as bleached and dry and desolate as the dust-deep road itself. There is water to be found at some little distance from the road, but it runs out of sight in a deep cleft in the earth; it cannot give even one gracious touch of green to break that searing monotony of light and quivering heat.

I have never seen a stretch of land that insisted more furiously upon being a desert. How it is I cannot say, but in Egypt one does not get the same effect of desperate desolation. The enormous spaces of the sand are terrible, not horrible. They are barren with a calm and as it were eternal content, and with majesty. But here is no majesty, only a mean and squalid futility. The sand has no choice but to be barren, but this land might be laughing with flowers and singing with the little whispering song of the wind among the corn. It is that perhaps which makes it horrible and a place of torment for the body and the soul.

As this plain is horrible, so is its heat horrible. Again it is different from other heat. There is the scorching fury of the blast that drives and burns

across the sand, and there is the demoralizing, langorous heat that soaks into every fibre of the being in such a town as Alexandria, but the heat of Güvezne is not like either of these. There is something sullen and savage about it, something poisonous. It happened to me to camp on that plain for two periods of a week and I would sooner have a month of the worst that the African desert can do than spend a third week there. It is better to be burnt up than stifled by foul, stale air from which all life-giving qualities have been drained away.

We came to the place by night, had our meal, and slept for a few hours under the stars. We awoke very early with a distinct impression that all the flies of Macedonia had gathered round our camp to welcome us. By eight in the morning it was uncomfortably hot, accustomed though we were to the climate. Bivouacs were put up without delay, for it was obvious that shade would be badly needed soon, and no shade or shelter from the sun could we have unless we made it ourselves. Two hours later we were lying in those bivouacs wondering what we had done to deserve it, and reflecting with uneasy minds that it was only ten o'clock.

A bivouac can be quite a good shelter if it is fortified a little. If you can cut a lot of scrub and pile above it, and if you turn its mouth to the pre-

vailing breeze—if any—your little canvas cave is at least tolerable during those hours when the heat compels people to remain still and under cover. But this wilderness had not even scrub to give us, and there was not even the faintest suggestion of a breeze. There was only the dead, unmoving air, and the sun which blazed through the thin canvas sheets with so little mitigation of his fury. We proceeded to spread blankets over the tops of our houses, and to wonder what more we could take off our bodies. But when your clothing consists of nothing but shirt, shorts, socks, puttees and boots, it is very difficult to know what you can remove without presenting large areas of your unhappy body to the exploring feet of the flies.

For as our misery increased so did the swarms of insects grow happier. They liked the heat. They revelled in the foul, smothering air; the wilderness was their chosen and beloved home, and they appreciated it thoroughly. Also they seemed to have an idea that we had come there on purpose to play with them and they meant to make the most of it. It is bad enough to be baked and smothered and poisoned, but when in addition you are invited to become the playmate of a few thousand flies, ants, spiders and grasshoppers, life seems rather too much of a burden.

There may be other countries as densely populated with insects as Macedonia, but it is a little

hard to believe that there are. Certainly the flies are a far worse plague than they ever were in Egypt. Wherever we went they were swarming. If we camped on a spot where no troops had been before and thought that we had escaped them, they were round us in millions within twenty-four hours. This ground at Güvezne had been used for camping before, and they were all ready for us. If we never see any more flies for all the rest of our lives we, who spent those two weeks on the detestable plain, shall have seen our share.

And the flies form only one of the tribes which infest the land. Everywhere the ground is alive with grasshoppers of all sorts and sizes which keep up a continual chirping all the day, to be succeeded by the tree-frogs which keep the night alive with sound. Also there are innumerable ants, and in many areas it does not seem possible to pitch a bivouac without having one or two of their holes within the boundaries of one's dwelling. Ants, however, do not give much trouble, and they are tidy little beasts. As you go on with the weary massacre of flies which is the chief business of the day, they wait on the floor to collect and carry off the dead bodies. They seem to find them useful.

Then there are numerous spiders, including one most objectionable variety, a large and heavy creature with a weakness for walking across one's

face in the middle of the night. It is not pleasant to wake up in the middle of that promenade; it is still less pleasant to wake and find that a massive centipede three inches long is doing the same thing. Those centipedes are perhaps the most loathsome of all. They are so big, so fond of going to sleep in one's bed, and they look so venomous. Probably they are perfectly harmless, but one instinctively believes the worst of such creatures without waiting for investigations. Also one kills them at sight and that in itself is a horrible business. There is so much squelching as the boot does its work.

When you get away from the insects the small live things of the land are rather entertaining. Lizards are everywhere, and they are lively, friendly little beasts. It is a pity that they feel so much like snakes in the dark, and newcomers are apt to be a little disturbed at first, but they soon get used to the small, bright-eyed animal that insists on a share of bivouac or hut. But of course the chief entertainer of the Salonika armies is the tortoise, the tortoise who stalks or occasionally gallops round the country, waving his head from side to side, inquiring into everything, carrying on all his most private affairs in the most shameless publicity, and upon occasion consenting to run races with others of his kind for the benefit of his owners and sundry amateur bookmakers.

If you have only known the tortoise sleeping in a corner of a conservatory or sluggishly wandering round some suburban garden, you cannot imagine how gay and alert a beast he can be. Also he is resourceful and given to helping his companions in distress. I went one day to my bivouac, tired with a long spell of road-making, and sprawled on the bed for a rest. Very much to my disgust I found a large, hard lump beneath me, and cursing my servant for spreading the bed on top of such a rock, I set to work to fish it out. It was not a stone at all, but a large and venerable tortoise who had burrowed under my blankets for a quiet nap. I did not appreciate his enterprise and I was annoyed, so I put him outside the door on his back, and a big tortoise on his back is one of the most helpless things in the world. I lay there, watching his frantic efforts to turn over, when suddenly another tortoise appeared. There was a little intelligent pushing and butting, and my captive was right side up once more, and hurrying off with his recuer to a place of safety.

You may be wondering why I should have begun this chapter with a large number of complaints about heat and a place called Güvezne, and then rambled off into a dissertation on tortoises. It is really quite simple, and the two things are not so far apart as they may seem to be. You see in those purgatorial days we had to get through the

time somehow, and all these flying and crawling and creeping things helped us to do it. In a country so empty of occupation as Macedonia at noon, it is something to have even a tortoise to watch; there is a little distraction in waiting to see what will be the next move of the lizard which is peering so inquiringly into the entrance of the bivouac. So when one begins to think of those days of torrid unhappiness, one thinks also of all those little animals which were our companions at the time, either as unendurable plagues, or as centers of a little interest on which the mind might fix for a while and forget the slow passing of the hours.

One thinks of them and of one thing beside—of thirst. There is the thirst which comes from marching or from long labor, but it is a sheer pleasure compared with that thirst that comes from lying still and being smothered by the lifeless burning air. You can come in from your march, drink a pint of anything that may be available, and get a space of sheer happiness and content. But when you are just waiting for the smoldering hours to pass there does not seem to be anything at all that will relieve the parched throat, and the mouth is always dry.

Besides, there is usually nothing to drink but water that is chlorinated and warm. To a genuine, toil-born thirst, that would seem good enough, but it is only an insult to the feverish craving that

comes from lying still and being hot. It seems to cake on the mouth and throat, so that the misery after drinking it is greater than the misery which went before. One can only lie there and dream of real drinks, cold drinks, drinks with none of that filthy taste in them.

The long day drags to its close, and with the evening comes the return of life. There is that much at least of gain in the business. When the sun is almost on the western hills one does taste something of the absolute joy of living. By the time tea is over—and scalding hot tea is a fine thing for that wretched thirst—the world appears to be a different place. That is the time when people who own guns go valiantly forth to look for hares, when one remembers letters that should be written, and has heart to discuss the chances of really finding the war at some time or other. It is possible then to take an interest in the prospect for dinner, and to go on excursions in search of eggs and tomatoes. The sunset is perceived to be glorious, and even the thistle-grown plain is not quite such a wilderness as formerly it had appeared to be.

There is the comfortable assurance that life will be quite tolerable for a matter of fourteen hours, and that the flies will go to sleep. Of course they prefer to go to sleep inside the bivouac if they can, and if you let them do that they are quite sure

to awaken you at sunrise. The best thing to do is to wait till they have settled down cosily for the night, so that most of the roof is black with them, and then get to work with a towel and beat and drive them out. They always seem too sleepy to find their way back and then when you go to bed you can drape mosquito netting over the entrance, and there will be no trouble about sleeping in the morning till you are officially awakened to get through another day of sun and sorrow.

CHAPTER X

SUNDAYS AT THE WAR

WE left Güvezne and marched away up the Seres road to Lahana, which stands just below the highest point which the road reaches on its journey from Salonika to the Struma. What we did there is a question of no importance, but we took three weeks over doing it, and on the Sundays we used to go to the war, because Sunday was a holiday and we could do what we liked. It was possible to start quite early in the morning because we had left the padre with the rest of the battalion lower down the road, so there were no church parades to hinder us. The cook was inclined to be grieved because he had to get up at unconscionable hours to give us breakfast, but that could not be helped. We had to make the most of the holiday.

It is quite easy to get to the war from Lahana. All that you have to do is to stop the first motor that comes along—so long as it is not a Red Cross car—and go as far as it will take you. If it is one of those modest, retiring motors that does not like

to push itself forward too far, you can always jump off when it stops and board one which is going further. Those lorries have to go fairly close to the trouble. They have shells to take to the batteries, and food for the men in the front line. Of course they don't go up to the front line, but there are times when they find themselves under fire. At the period of which I am writing, the Bulgar was in the habit of dropping an occasional shell on the road. His attentions did not make the road much worse than it was before, but they served to put a spice of adventure into our journeying.

The proper thing to do first of all was to go and call on a battery. There was always sure to be one about somewhere, if only you could find it. Locating batteries is not the easiest job in the world, even when they are on your own side and you are free to move where you will in search of them, and it is more difficult than usual in Macedonia because the country is so very complex. But one learns in time to track the guns to their hiding place in some secret valley or other, and there they are, sending little messengers out across the river and the plain to some village which is suspected of concealing the enemy.

There is at least one thing to be said in favor of our war in Macedonia—it is possible to look at it. There is no question of sitting dismally in

a trench and squinting round corners through a periscope. When you are up with a battery, you can generally watch the shells arrive at their journey's end, which is much more satisfactory than being informed through a telephone that some invisible target has been hit. It is possible to sit on a hill above the guns and see quite plainly what they are doing. You may watch a village being literally taken to pieces.

It is all rather curious. One cannot feel much sympathy for the average Macedonian village. It does not look as if anybody loved it; if one had the dreadful misfortune to be born in such a place one would, I think, desire most urgently to forget the fact. But even so it is not possible to forget that it was once the habitation of men, and that children played round those ugly little houses before war came and sent the bullock wagons creaking down the road. It all seems rather a pity. . . . But presently interest gets the better of emotion, and one watches with an increasing pride the careful, accurate work of the men at the guns, as bit by bit the village jumps into the air amid a cloud of dust and vanishes. How such accuracy is achieved one cannot tell, but there it is, and it is a fascinating thing to watch.

Observed under those conditions, war becomes almost impersonal. Instead of being a thing of passion and emotion, it is a cold-blooded game of

skill, in which all the players, down to one's very self, are just pawns. Possibly the enemy is trying to find and silence the battery, and his exploring shells are bursting at varying distances around. It does not matter. There may be a consciousness that if one shell landed at one's feet the consequences would be disastrous, but then it seems—and is—so very unlikely that any shell would land in so inconvenient a spot, that the question of personal peril simply does not arise. So, too, if the glasses show little figures flying from the village below, and some of them crumple up and fall—it does not feel as if the final catastrophe had overtaken some human beings; it is simply that some pawns have been removed from the board. It is all in the game, the fate of those little distant figures, the fate of the men one knows, one's own fate. Those shells bursting around do not stand for the menace of pain and death so much as for tokens of the enemy's failure to be as clever as our men. The gunner is more of a scientist than a warrior, and the emotions he gets out of war are not unlike those which you find in golf or cricket, or any game of skill.

If you wish to get down to the stark realities of war, outpost and patrol work can be recommended. Charging trenches or other positions is all very well for war-frenzy, but the night work is the thing to drive home the sheer facts of con-

flict and peril and the worth of individual superiority. Sometimes if you go down from the batteries to call on the men in the front line they will let you lend a hand if anything is going to happen. It is necessary of course, to be careful how you invite yourself, and to avoid attracting the attention of commanding officers and adjutants. It is not altogether that they want the whole affair to themselves. They are not so much greedy over the war, as concerned about what might happen to them if by chance you were killed while on their hands, and they were called upon to explain why you were there. I am not aware of any regulation forbidding one to go and study the war at close quarters, but there are so many regulations in army life that one is always apt to think that anything out of the ordinary must be in disobedience of an order which one has for the moment forgotten.

Going as a member of an outpost company in unfamiliar country at night is always a good adventure. The men fall in so quietly on the dim parade-ground, wherever and whatever it may be, and the business begins to be interesting at once. It grows still more interesting when, with only a whispered word of command they begin to move off and vanish, so that when your turn comes and you follow, it is only possible to see the few who are immediately in front of you, and all the

rest are folded away in the darkness. That is the time to test a man's power of marching at night. If the battalion is without experience of the game that progress will be slow, very uneasy, and very noisy. But the old hands go very softly and quickly onward. They avoid obstacles at whose existence they can scarcely guess; they choose the surest way by instinct, and never do they commit that major crime of showing themselves on the skyline.

Outpost work in Macedonia is so fascinating because the country varies so incessantly and so greatly. There is a different problem to solve every time. You have to choose the line which, in your opinion, can be held, and then you have to make your arrangements for holding it, and that in a country of innumerable hills and valleys. There come to the mind all sorts of crowding pictures. The golf enthusiast goes about the country planning imaginary links across each fresh landscape; the soldier, if he is just an ordinary infantryman, is more likely to be arranging outpost schemes. And when it is night, and the tangle of hills is suggested rather than seen, and roving bands of the enemy may be anywhere in the darkness, the game becomes really worth playing. Sitting now in quiet security and looking back, one sees how good a game it was.

One night there was a sharp little rock strewn

hill to climb, and the ridge of it had to be crossed somehow. Luckily the ridge itself was covered with great boulders and we threaded and crawled through them till we were safely established on the far slope. Then, just as we were about to make our dispositions a messenger came back from the scouts who were pushing on ahead. A party of the enemy was crossing our front. There was a quick, whispered word, and our men sank out of sight among the rocks, and no sound gave warning of our presence. But very soon there were sounds which told of the coming of the others, and they came and passed, not twenty yards away. Their strength was about equal to our own, and, taking them by surprise, we should have had all the advantage, but it was not our business to advertise our presence, and so long as they did not turn towards our camp in the rear, they must go unharmed and in ignorance. In ignorance they went, turning back to their own place, and presently the sound of their passing died away, and we could get on with our own work.

Encounters of that kind have been frequent on the Struma front, and most men who have been down there for any length of time could tell of something of the sort happening to them when they have been out on patrol duty. Sometimes, of course, it is necessary or advisable to fight. (Rather I should say it is permissible. There is

no waiting for necessity, and the patrol commander who, acting on strict orders, forbids an encounter is rather more unhappy than the men under him.) Those are the occasions when the bayonet does some of its deadliest work. Shooting is usually to be avoided, since it gives away so much information and wakes up the artillery, so there is the fierce, quiet struggle in the dark, till the survivors of one side or the other realize that there is nothing for it but to slip away among the shadows.

In these affairs, as in all the operations of war, the tricks of chance are unaccountable. One man I knew had a piece of bad luck quite equal to that of the man who got a bullet through his body while he was sitting at tea. This other had been out with a patrol. They had had a highly successful trip and were returning unharmed and jubilant. They were close to our lines when some distant Bulgar loosed off another of those random shots at the sky. In its downward flight the bullet took my friend's right eye out almost as neatly as a surgeon could have done. He felt, so he says, very little pain either at the time or at any time afterwards, but his disgust was tragic. Later on I found him, still fuming, in a hospital in Salonika, roaming round the wards in pajamas and a dressing gown, because he had nothing else to wear. His kit had vanished. When he was hit he had only

been wearing a shirt and shorts, and he had been waiting for some clothes for a fortnight, waiting for them to come so that he might sail for home. He seemed to consider that luck had deserted him completely.

But on the whole the Struma valley would be quite a happy place if it were not for the mosquitoes. The trouble about Macedonia is that you have so many things to fight. There is the landscape to be conquered, and the water to be kept in order, and malaria to be opposed, and all these things must be done before you can pay any seriout attention to the Hun and his companions. So on the Struma the real weapons are mosquito nets and quinine, and the real enemy is that deplorable insect which sits on the side of the bivouac hanging its head so sheepishly in the morning when it has spent all the night in taking blood out of one's body and putting poison in.

In spite of mosquitoes, however, we always looked forward to those Sundays. It is true that the work we were doing was important and even necessary, but it was very dull, and it was not a bit like war.

CHAPTER XI

PLAYTIME IN MACEDONIA

PLAYTIME is really a serious problem in Macedonia. While we remained at Lahana and could have those Sunday excursions we were quite happy, but there were only three such Sundays, and then we returned to the old, familiar condition of having plenty of time to spare and absolutely nothing to do with it. I should think there never was a country so empty of the means of entertainment. Since our transport usually consisted of pack mules, we could carry nothing with us that was not absolutely essential. The weight of our kit was constantly being checked, and if it exceeded the standard of the moment something had to be left behind, and our track was marked by abandoned articles of clothing and other personal tackle. Under those conditions the utmost that one could carry in the way of apparatus for recreation was a pack of cards, and curiously, few of us had packs of cards to carry. Even if we had them, they were hardly ever used. During the whole of the time I was in the country

I only played bridge twice, till I went into hospital. It did not seem to occur to us to play games.

There were no collective amusements at all. It is possible that there were in the land battalions who possessed concert parties of their own and had regular entertainments, but I did not come in contact with them. It is a little difficult to have concerts without a piano, and the army is not encouraged to carry pianos about Macedonia. There was one in the Y.M.C.A. tent in the old base camp at Karaissi, but I did not see another until I was on the boat which took me away, nor did I see another of the tents of the Y.M.C.A. Very likely there are units which excel in camp-fire concerts, but we had no gifts in that direction. It did not occur to us to sing, just as it did not occur to us to play cards, or, indeed, any other games. I suppose we might have played football if we had owned a ball, but we had nothing of the sort, and no one felt the lack of it badly enough to send for one. The various units stationed in and about Salonika used to play matches at times, but we up-country people had nothing to do with those festivities, nor any chance to take part in them.

Some units took more pains to amuse themselves than we did. I have heard of at least one battery of the artillery which owned a gramophone and took it all round the country, but of course in the artillery there is a chance to carry such things. And

one day, upon those hills north-east of Ambarkoj, I discovered evidence that at least one member of the Salonika armies had a desire for collective amusements, for the wind brought to me across the tangle of the evergreen oak a sheet of paper which I found to be a copy of a seventeenth-century madrigal. It seemed a curious thing to find there, on those lonely, distant hills, so far from all those choral societies and glee clubs and the like with which we noise-making people delight ourselves. It is not possible to understand why a man should have brought such a thing so far unless he had with him companions who would help to sing it, and one imagines that there is, somewhere in Macedonia, a battalion accustomed to music. It would have been a happy thing to have found that cheerful camp, but all the country round was bare of troops, and the madrigal itself was so weather-worn that it must have been blowing to and fro on those hills for a long time. I put it in my pocket and I have it still, a curious relic of the army and of the country where for so long our men have had to face the difficult task of keeping out of mischief.

For of course the natural thing to do if you have time to spare and no occupation is to get into mischief, and if we had been living under those conditions in any ordinary country it is possible that there would have been a great deal of trouble. But the country is so far from ordinary that there

was very little trouble indeed. There were of course shops in the villages where liquids prejudicial to discipline could be obtained. On the counter of nearly every Macedonian shop you will find three bottles containing Vin Samos, mastic, and cognac, and it did happen from time to time that some unlucky private would be taken with a terrible thirst, contrive to get past the military police into the nearest village, and proceed to empty bottles of cognac. Then he would return to the camp in a condition of valiant frenzy which would lead him to the guard-room and first-hand knowledge of Field Punishment No. 1. But such incidents were very rare. Most of the villages are so small that it is quite easy to keep the thirsty souls out of them, and our men behaved wonderfully well.

Their conduct was the more creditable because it frequently happened that for weeks at a time it was impossible to organize anything in the shape of a canteen. When the camp was pitched away among the hills where neither beer nor any other stores could be obtained, the canteen ceased to exist until we moved to some happier spot, where day by day the little bullock carts would come rumbling and creaking with the barrels, and there would be tinned fruit, sardines, cigarettes and other luxuries on sale, and time would not hang quite so heavily on their hands.

But even when the canteen was in working order it could not occupy more than a little of the spare time, and it was always rather hard to discover just what the men did with themselves. Of course most of the leisure hours in the hot weather came in the middle of the day when the heat is too great for any kind of exertion. During those hours they would lie in their bivouacs, and sleep or talk. They were great talkers, those lads of ours, and they would go on, hour after hour. What they found to talk about I cannot say, but it is the same all through the army; and you will never find a camp that is not humming with talk through every idle hour.

So they would talk, and attend to their clothes and kit, and do their washing. There are no laundries in Macedonia, and the ladies of the land have not realized that they could make a very good living by taking in washing. Their general appearance forces one to the conclusion that they are unaccustomed to the idea of washing their own clothes, so probably they would be intensely astonished if they realized we should be quite prepared to pay them to wash our things. But if he cannot find any one to do it for him, the soldier is thoroughly capable of doing his own washing, and usually he does it very well. Disdaining the slipshod habit of using cold water, you may see them building tiny fires and boiling the water in their

mess tins, and soaping and scrubbing the clothes with skilful energy. One of our men actually owned a little flat-iron, and it was as hard-working a piece of metal as I have ever known. It was constantly being borrowed by the dandies, who sought to increase the beauty of their shirts or to give a finer finish to their socks. And I know that my washing was done as I have rarely had it done by any laundry at home. The soldier has the trick of doing thoroughly all the infinitely varied jobs which he may have to undertake.

It is possible that many men will bring back hobbies from Salonika. It was quite interesting to notice on hospital ships and in hospitals on the way home how many owned those little pocket chess boards and sets of pieces which can be folded into the shape and size of a note case. Then there were others who had taken up sketching, and some who had carried round little volumes of poetry and read them till they knew every line by heart. There is, of course, nothing to read in the up-country camps except the *Balkan News,* and such books and papers as may be sent from home. There can be no camp libraries, nor are there any of those distributions of papers and magazines which brighten the life of our men in France. In consequence everyone reads everything that comes from cover to cover, and advertisements get an amount of attention which would make the fortune of the

advertisers if only their shops were not so far away. Papers and magazines and books are passed from hand to hand while they will hold together, and nobody minds what he gets hold of so long as it is some print which he can read. If you see, as I have seen, an entirely illiterate Irishman poring over the *Saturday Review* it does not mean that ours is the most intellectual army the world has ever known. It only means that he is very bored with the cycle of his thoughts and that printed words, incomprehensible though they may be, are giving him a little blessed relief. I have known what it is to be profoundly charmed and affected by the information, gleaned from the columns of a local weekly, that Mrs. Smith of Smith Villa, requires a house-parlormaid, that there are three in the family, that two other servants are kept, that the wages offered are £18, and that an abstainer is desired. If I had not been soaking up those details I might have been listening to some one who would say, "But the A.S.C. say that if we do advance they can't feed us. . . ."

Everybody knows that people whose working hours are full of the most violent physical exertions do quite commonly seek more exertions when playtime comes, and so it was with us. Every now and then the entire camp would seem to be taken with a mania for hurling large stones about. You

would see men standing in rows and throwing great pieces of rock in the fashion laid down for the throwing of bombs, and they might keep it up for half an hour in a valiant contest. Our bombing expert was usually in the thick of these outbursts of energy, improving the occasion with a few words of advice. He was one of those enthusiasts who believe utterly that the war can only be won with the aid of their own special line, and nothing would have pleased him more than to have had a whole battalion of bombers.

One other amusement we had which called for plenty of exertion, and was occasionally profitable to the mess. We used to get our revolvers and go out looking for hares. Macedonia is simply alive with game in certain areas. It seems impossible to walk a couple of hundred yards without putting up a covey of partridges or a great, galloping hare. To go hunting hares with a revolver is quite amusing, though of course it is not regarded with favor by those aristocrats who have shot guns and treat themselves seriously as purveyors of game. But if you have no gun, and are very weary of seeing large quantities of desirable food escaping from you it is soothing to take your Webley for a walk round the hills. Of course it is more a matter of luck than anything else. A service revolver is a wonderful weapon with a great range, but it takes a crack shot to put a bullet into a retreating hare,

and so to hit it, moreover, that the animal shall not be reduced to a shapeless mash of fur and flesh and splinters of bone. But if by some fluke the bullet just chips the head, the prospect for to-morrow's dinner is suddenly and wonderfully improved, and there is ample recompense for three hours of scrambling over rocks and through thickets of brambles.

The evening was the time when we went on those excursions, and the evenings of Macedonia do very much to atone for the rest of the day. And it was good to come back to the camp, and to sit on a bank outside the bivouac watching the pageant of the west, listening to the guns as they grew busy with the evening performance. That was the time when the mess president would send for the jealously guarded bottles and we would sit through that half-hour before dinner, quite cheerfully discussing the things we had discussed half a hundred times already, having recovered from the weariness and irritation of the day, being at peace with the world.

That was, perhaps, our only real recreation, the only game we played consistently—just that game of sitting and talking in the delicate evening air when all the work was done and our bodies were tired enough to get the full flavor of enjoyment out of rest. Probably they were very monotonous conversations, but indeed they do not seem so in

retrospect. The memory of those hours is very pleasant. And there was always something to watch, if it was only the shifting of color on land and sky or the slow departure of the light.

We learned that it is not necessary to be amused. I fancy that many of those who return will find that a gulf has established itself between them and the friends who have remained at home. When at last I was set free to be with my own people for a little while it was with an actual sense of surprise that I realized that it was considered usual to go out in the evening to theaters and music halls and concerts, to dine at restaurants, to play games, and generally to avail one's self of the elaborate machinery of entertainment. That machinery seemed to have lost all purpose and value. It did not appear that there was anything of worth in the activities of the professional entertainers; it seemed so much better to sit still, to talk a little from time to time, to revel in that little space of rest and dear companionship.

I suppose there is something which tends to simplicity in such a life as that which we were leading—a simplicity which is not of the surface, but deeper. We did not acquire scorn of pleasant food, of good clothes and comfortable beds, but our minds, unwearied by the complexities of modern civilization, did not require such labored amusement. They were content with a little dreaming

as the flames of the camp fires went stabbing upwards; for long enough to come we shall find a sufficient splendor in sitting at the close of day by our own hearths swathed in the secure comforts of peace.

CHAPTER XII

HOW WE WENT TO JANES

TO us at Lahana there came orders to pack up our traps and depart in haste to a place called Janes, on the other side of the country. It may be as well to remark that it is not customary to pronounce this name as if it was the plural of Jane. It is more usual to make the sound Yanesh, with the accent on the -esh. The letter j in Macedonian names has the force and qualities of y, and if this is remembered there will be no difficulty with them. It is true that even so the pronunciation will not be exactly that of the people who live in the villages, but no arrangement of letters would do justice to the noises they produce, and they always understand when we speak the names in our own fashion.

So much for the name. Janes, as the map will show, is a place which lies behind the Doiran front. It was the pleasure of the authorities to send us from time to time to sit down behind different portions of the front, to listen to other people busy with the war. We never knew why we were

sent. It did not appear that anybody ever wanted us, nor did anybody seem glad to see us. But it was an order, so we tramped to and fro across the country, gaining much knowledge of hill and valley and mountain track, and hoping eternally that at the end of each journey we should really find the war. There is something very cheering about the tidings that the battalion is ordered to make haste to a distant place. It sounds as if something is really going to happen at last, and that thought is enough to banish all weariness. In this instance the orders came at eight in the evening after a hard day's work, and it was stated that we were to be ready to march out at ten. Nothing but the prospect of a fight at the end of the journey could make troops cheerful under such conditions. To be told to pull down your house and pack it up just when you are thinking of crawling indoors and going to sleep is depressing.

But rumors help one round some awkward corners in the army. Within an hour the camp had been swept away and folded up. Down in the transport lines mules were entering their usual protests against pack saddles, and little groups of officers were poring over maps by the light of the dancing flames of candles. We knew those maps by heart, but we could never resist the temptation to stare at them on such occasions. It was as though we hoped to discover something that

would improve our chances of getting into the firing line, as though they held the secret of our fate concealed among their innumerable contours. And as we traced the way we talked, eagerly and happily, and for a long time no one thought to quote that classic saying of the A.S.C. which had killed so many of our dreams.

So it came to be ten o'clock, and under the light of the stars we scrambled across a mile of furiously broken country to our old friend the Seres road. The length of time which a battalion requires to get under way at night depends very exactly on its experience. If it is a new, half-trained unit there are delays which spoil tempers, and the adjutant rides up and down the line with fury increasing in his heart. But there are no such troubles when you have old hands to deal with. Everything slips into its place swiftly and easily. The transport does not go wandering off across country in the opposite direction, and the ammunition mules are ready behind their companies. Far away in England we had objected to night operations, but in Macedonia we realized what we gained through having been trained and drilled in the dark. In a very little while we were moving off down the road.

Somewhere between Likovan and Güvezne—its exact position is a matter of no importance—there exists a rest camp, established for the use of

troops whose business it is to move on the road. Why it was pitched in the particular position which it occupies I do not know; it is possible that nobody knows. To be sure there is a convenient water supply, but there is nothing else to recommend it. It is arranged on a series of sharp little ridges, with deep ditches and gullies crossing it in all directions. When the marching men come to the gate of it they are met by others bearing lanterns who proceed to conduct them through the perilous gloom. In most places it is necessary to go in single file, and for a battalion to pass a point in that fashion takes some time. More of the lantern-bearers take charge of the transport, and lead it off to another place, so that you are effectually divorced from your kit and stores. The ground reserved for officers appears, in the darkness, to be so cleverly fortified by ditches that no one could possibly reach it unless he had spent his life in studying the arrangements. By the time you get to that high bank, and see below you the little lights which mark the lines where the men are resting, and a dim, distant confusion which conceals the transport and all your blankets, you are apt to be out of love with Macedonia.

It was my fate to come twice to that camp, each time on a dark night. In the morning it looks rather pretty and there is a good view, but nothing can persuade me that it is a nice camp, or that

the man who chose such a position for it has a kind heart. On this occasion we reached it between one and two in the morning, and the fact that we had been there before did not make things any easier for us. It was nearly an hour and a half before the tangle was straightened out and the blankets appeared, so that we could roll ourselves up and sleep for a brief two hours. We left the place soon after five, and marched off down the road once more, on the second stage of our journey.

If you look at a small map of Macedonia you may wonder why we were going down the Seres road to get from Lahana to Janes. It will seem that the more direct way would have been across country by Rahmanli and Kukus, but if you study a really large map you will see why we had to work back towards Salonika first. Lahana stands on its hill-top in the heart of a great tangle of hills. To travel direct from there to Kukus would mean an endless swarming up high places, an endless scrambling down into sudden valleys. A very few strong and well-practised men might make the journey in the time we took over the detour, but it would be impossible for a battalion with its transport to travel that way without the most serious loss of time. The Seres road is indescribably bad, but it is the only way across those hills which is in the least practicable. There is no other

way of getting to Lahana which an army could use. Five miles away on either side of the road you might dwell remote and inaccesible, untroubled by the motions of the world.

The hills run up from a point just north of Salonika in a fairly well defined range which parts the valley of the Galika and the plain to the west of it from the valley of the Kurudere and the plain which holds Güvezne. To the north of Ambarkoj the hills spread out fanwise, and go piling up in heaped confusion all the way to the Struma valley. The only way of getting from the Struma to the Doiran front is to travel down almost to Güvezne and then to strike westwards and across the hills at Ambarkoj by way of Salihli. That route is practicable in summer, if you have nothing very heavy to drag with you, but in all rainy weather it is quite impossible, for then the dry beds of streams become fierce torrents with power to sweep a man's feet from under him. Either you must make bridges, or you must go round by some other way where bridges are already in existence.

But though summer had passed into autumn the rains had not yet come, so we went to Güvezne, rested there on that unhappy plain through the heat of the day, and turned our faces to the west in the evening. Being as it is the gate between the two fronts with which our men are concerned, I suppose nearly every unit in the Salonika force

has passed that way at one time or another, and has known the relief of climbing from the plain where the flies make a constant cloud about man and beast to the hills where they drop away and leave one in peace. Certainly the people of Salihli are quite accustomed to the passing of the army, and they have learnt more of our ways and desires than most of the villagers ever trouble to learn. Directly the column appears in sight there is a mighty searching and ransacking of all the places where the fowls do commonly lay the eggs, and then the population lines up by the roadside ready to do business. The Macedonian egg is not cheap. Almost everywhere a drachma—which is tenpence—is charged for four, but eggs are much to be desired, and though some may object, every one pays. The right thing to do when you are entering Salihli is to work towards the head of the column and do your shopping before the others come up, or all the eggs will be sold, and the natives will only have tomatoes and woolly-hearted melons to offer.

We reached our camping ground above Ambarkoj at eight in the evening, having covered twenty-four miles in twenty-two hours. That would be little enough in a civilized country, but in Macedonia it is rather more than it sounds, and we were weary people. But, high on those hills, there was enough light remaining for the arrange-

ments for the night to be made properly, and for the cooking to be done. There was a comfortable meal for everyone, and when it was over we sat, very many of us, looking towards the hills which fence Lake Dorian, watching for the flash of the bursting shells, full of the contented weariness which is the great reward of such campaigning as ours. We slept late the next morning. Our orders were to reach Janes in the evening, and it did not seem necessary to arrive earlier. We breakfasted at ease between nine and ten, and proceeded to pack once more, taking our time about it, refusing to be disturbed. We moved out of the camp in leisurely fashion at 1 p.m., breaking for the first time that rule which forbids marching in the middle of the day. We were whole-hearted admirers of the rule by the time we had finished the journey.

Every soldier can remember one march which stands out as the worst of all his experience. Usually it occurs in the course of his training, while he is being broken to the burden of his new life, but it does occasionally, through force of circumstances or by reason of the malice of the enemy, come later. That march from Ambarkoj to Janes was the most abominable I have ever known, and I suppose if I live to be an old man with lots of small people round me who want to know what I did in the great war, I shall bore them to death with accounts of it.

The personal side of the matter is utterly unimportant, but that small experience does stand as a very fair specimen of the kind of thing our men have had to put up with in Macedonia. Many people seem to imagine that our life in that irritating land has been one long picnic, remote from the perils of war. It is not, however, our fault or our choice that we had so little actual fighting, and the only sort of picnic which our experiences could be said to resemble would be one in which the picnic basket had been left behind and half of the party were more or less ill all the time. So far I have said little about malaria, the greatest of our foes in Macedonia. It will be necessary to say something about it later on, but for the present it is enough to record the fact that a touch of the fever came upon me just as that march was beginning, and remained with me for four out of the five hours which the journey occupied. Add to this the facts that through some misunderstanding about the water supply, hardly anyone had a drop of water in his bottle, that the sun was blazing over head, and that our way was deep in dust where it did not lie among scorched, ensnaring herbage, and you will realize that the conditions were not the most favorable that could be imagined.

But our men have had to march under those conditions very many times. They have had to endure

the heat and the dust and the maddening thirst of their fever-shaken bodies, and all that hideous torment of the brain which at such hours can find no rest in even the dearest and most sacred of memories, but sees them as things distorted and terrible. At such a time one can only keep upright while moving. At every halt it is necessary to lie down quickly, till the moment comes to move forward again. To sit on a horse would be impossible; there is nothing to do but to go staggering on. There are visions of all cool springs and clear, cold water which come to cheat and baffle and mock, together with recollections of all the delectable drinks in the world. At one time I was dreaming of the drink called John Collins which they compound so admirably in the Khedival Club in Alexandria; at another there was the memory of the lager beer which comes to one in tall glasses at the Café Royal; again it was a vision of an inn I know in Derbyshire where the good beer is brought in great earthenware mugs. And all the time there were some words from the Mass running a hopeless, meaningless race through my useless brain—*qui nos præcesserunt cum signo fidei et dormiunt in somno pacis.* It was a thoroughly unpleasant business, and I could not for the life of me understand why the Romans found it necessary to have two words for "sleep."

I want to insist that I am not writing of this

experience as a hardship which I suffered alone. I have no hard case to present for sympathetic attention. Hundreds and thousands of our men have endured as much and more in that country, and for that reason only the thing is mentioned. Their suffering, their misery, must be set down to the account of the Salonika force as surely as the agony of the wounded is credited to the account of our troops in France. We were bitten by mosquitoes instead of being shattered by bullets, but the result was not different in the end, and one can do no more than go on suffering up to that point where Nature sends the saving gift of unconsciousness; there is that limit fixed to all that a man can endure, and it has been reached not once but very many times by those who have played their part in the war by marching up and down and across Macedonia. And there are graves in that remote, inhospitable land.

These things must be written if justice is to be done. There is a great tendency to regard the wounded man as being on a far higher plane than the man who merely contracted sickness in the service of his country. The wounded man is given gold stripes to wear. If he is an officer he is presented with a large sum of money as a wound gratuity—but there is nothing for the man who has merely fallen ill. He may be one of those who came away from Gallipoli with their constitutions

shattered beyond hope of repair by dysentery; he may be tortured and twisted and crippled with rheumatism from the trenches in France; he may be so poisoned by malaria in Mesopotamia or Macedonia, that the trouble will remain with him while life lasts, but in any event there is nothing for him. He has no gold stripes or gratuities, nor is it likely that his pension will reflect what he endured. In hospitals, in convalescent camps, and even at home in England, he is given to understand that he is a bit of a failure—a "wash-out" in the slang of the day—and not to be compared with some lucky youngster who has had a finger shot off or a tibia fractured.

I want to suggest that this is damnably unfair, and I can do it the more freely because in my own case the damage is unimportant. The fact that I shall be liable for years to attacks of malaria will not affect my power to earn my own living after the war, so I am free to speak. And I want to suggest and to say as loudly as possible that the men who have been made ill in the service of their country do deserve every whit as much consideration as those who have been wounded. Their bodies are frequently damaged to a far greater and more permanent degree; the damage was incurred in exactly the same service.

No one who has belonged to the Salonika forces can avoid feeling strongly on this point. Every

soldier who is invalided home is an object of interest, at first. "Hullo, where were you hit?" is the unvarying question. There comes the reply, "I wasn't hit. I was at Salonika." There follows the unfailing comment—"Oh, I thought you were wounded." And that kind of thing is irritating to a man who knows that every few months for the rest of his life there will come a time when he will wish with all his heart that he had lost a leg or an arm or an eye rather than endure the misery which is his portion.

Having said these things I may perhaps record the fact that after four hours that particular attack of fever passed off, and I marched very happily into our camp at Janes, as anxious as anyone to know about our chances of reaching the war. There came to us a lost, disconsolate staff officer, who desired to know what we belonged to and why we had come.

"I've heard nothing about you," he said when his questions had been answered. "I'd no idea you were coming, but I suppose it's all right. No, there's nothing for you to do up here. The usual strafe is going on at Doiran of course, but nothing to worry about, and you won't be wanted anyhow. But we've got heaps of blackberries round here, and perhaps your chaps would like to make some jam."

It was Macedonia and we were accustomed to

Macedonia, so we did not say anything. There are so many occasions in that country when speech would be utterly inadequate, and we had learned how to be silent. We had marched to the place in haste, but we were not wanted. Up there by Doiran a few little miles away the guns were thundering, but we were not required. The war had done without us for so long, and it was still able to worry along without us. In the meantime there were blackberries, and we had permission and encouragement to make jam.

You may find it hard to believe, but it is written in the history of the regiment that we settled down in that camp and proceeded to make jam.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCERNING SPIES

TWO or three days after we had settled down at Janes, a Hun came over to see what he could do for us. There were some anti-aircraft guns between us and the frontier, about three miles from our camp, and they did their best to argue with him. For a full five minutes we were admiring a pretty arrangement of smoke-balls which fluffed out of nothing in positions all round the tiny speck of the aeroplane, but he was a wise Hun, and he traveled high overhead and came sailing on, beyond the reach of the unpleasant splinters which our friends tried to scatter in his way. He came on and on, and at last he was circling very happily over our camp. If he had not been so wise, he would probably have come down a few thousand feet to make sure of his aim, taking his chance of what our rifles might do. As it was he dropped his bombs from something over ten thousand feet, and we had only a horse and a mule to put in the casualty list. But his coming left us full of solemn thoughts about the local Macedonians.

Every average inhabitant of Macedonia is so curiously inaccessible. He lives in his terrible little villages, and seems to watch our progress with sullen, incurious eyes. He may stand upright for a time to watch the passing of our men, but soon he bends once more to his toil as though the matter did not concern him. If he keeps a shop he will sometimes condescend to sell his goods, in the same sullen fashion. He takes refuge all the time behind the barrier of his uncouth language.

The army has the gift of tongues in no small measure. I have seen new drafts come out to Egypt, and I have heard them a fortnight later with all sorts of Arab slang at the tips of their tongues. Our men bring back words in many dialects from India, and the South African war made some enduring additions to our vocabulary. But there is another tale to tell in Macedonia. Why it should be I cannot imagine, but no one seems to pick up the language. At the end of my own time I only knew three words. I could make the noise which means eggs, and the other noise which means water, and one other which is a term—probably obscene—expressing hatred coupled with a burning desire for the person addressed to depart at once. We had a few men, born traders, who were sent regularly into the villages to buy eggs and fowls and fruit, but I could never find that they had learnt much of the language. They seemed to con-

duct their business entirely by signs, and I found myself that the only way to go shopping in Macedonia was to walk behind the counter, open all the drawers and cupboards and inspect the stock for myself, and then strike a bargain by signs. The language is, I suppose, a more or less debased form of modern Greek, but in many of the villages there is so strong a Turkish element that Arabic terms are frequently understood.

But whatever he may understand of an alien tongue, the Macedonian makes no sign. He remains silent and inscrutable. We are in his country—well, that is our affair. It is nothing to do with him and he will have nothing to do with us, unless we damage his crops. Then he will come demanding compensation, if he has no woman to send to speak for him. Of course a certain number of the men of the country have been enrolled in labor battalions or hired to act as muleteers, but the people of the up-country villages remain untouched, to outward seeming, by all the raging of war. They see our columns moving to and fro, and go on their own way unheeding. We send our fine new roads sweeping past their villages, but they cling to their time-worn tracks and pass with averted heads. They are not even sufficiently interested to seek to make money out of us by catering for our wants.

So it might seem that these people were de-

termined to ignore our presence in the land, and to treat us as if we did not exist—it might seem like that to anyone who did not know the facts, who had forgotten how the Hun set himself to permeate, that he might eventually dominate, all the Balkans. The German was in the land before us, and his agents remain to bear witness of him. Other maps are being made in these days, but for long enough our armies in Salonika could find none but German maps of the land—wonderful maps, crowded with a wealth of laborious detail which could not smother blazing inaccuracies. The German influence which has made Greece so bothersome is living still in all sorts of little villages of the plains and hills of Macedonia. Many of those sullen, silent peasants have excellent reasons for serving the German interest—reasons which take form and substance in tangible rewards. They learned the lesson before ever the war began to trouble Europe, and they have not forgotten. Because they have not forgotten that Hun came over to drop his bombs into our camp at Janes.

A camp which is composed of bivouacs is not a conspicuous object. It nestles down so close to the ground, and there is nothing in its coloring to catch the eye. Tents, even when they have been darkened and adorned with smudges of brown and yellow and green have their distinct and defiant shape and are hard to miss. But bivouacs are

hard to detect from a distance, and a high-flying airman would need to search very carefully before he found the camp. To make sure that our camps shall not be missed, and to guide his friends on the other side of the frontier, the innocent Macedonian strolls out of his village, makes his observations, chooses a spot which fulfils his requirements, and starts a prairie fire. He works on a system which is thoroughly understood by those whom he seeks to assist, and in a little while the aeroplanes are coming over to investigate and perhaps to take action.

So it is that if a fire starts anywhere in the neighborhood of a camp, or along the line of march, the first thing to do is to look for somebody to hang. It might be an accident, of course, but such accidents are not usual, and it is better to make sure. Following upon the visit which we received, a small party went out to pay some calls in the district, traveling in a motor borrowed for the occasion, and with carefully loaded revolvers. Attached to the party was a Macedonian who could speak quite twenty words of English, and claimed to be a follower of M. Venezelos, and our devoted friend. In addition he declared that he had personal knowledge of all the people of all the villages for miles around and knew the records of all the bad characters. There was, he said, a spy hiding in one of the villages, a man for whom

the authorities in Salonika were searching. This man we must capture, and all would be well.

Motoring in Macedonia is not a pastime for the idle rich. The way for that journey lay along the roughest of tracks, far from any of the roads which the army has made. It was a matter of bumping painfully from one village to the next, with occasional halts where the whole party had to turn out to help the car over some particularly vicious little gully. And at every village there was a weary round of apparently fruitless talk. First there was a search for the chief man of the place. Then when he was found, our Macedonian would lead him aside with an air of gravest importance. The talk would go on sometimes for as long as half an hour, and sitting in a car under the blistering sun amid the varied smells of a Macedonian village for half an hour is not pleasant. Meanwhile the inhabitants would come out to stare at us with lowering faces. I remember one old woman. Not for a moment did she cease her business of threading tobacco leaves on a piece of string, but all the time she was glaring at us with the deadliest hate, the ugliest, bitterest fury seamed across her old, brown face. She might have been the mother of the man we sought.

But always the report was that the elusive person had moved on to the next village, and to the next village we must go, bumping over some more

kilometers of those intolerable tracks, and at last we began to cherish hard thoughts about our gudie. He seemed to feel that there was trouble brewing, for suddenly he sprang up and pointed far out across the plain to where a man moved slowly behind a flock of goats. He was out of the car in a moment, and racing over the ground while we toiled behind him. He reached the shepherd long before we did, and when we arrived he turned to us with a glum face and an air of intense depression. This, we gathered, was not our man after all. It was his brother, a good man, and a friend. The man whom we sought— he was far away. The good brother had not seen him for many weeks. All the foolish people who had been directing us had been helping us to find the good brother, and now there was nothing to be done. Everyone knew that this was a good man.

There are some problems which are too hard even for the army, and plumbing the depths of Macedonian character is one of them. Perhaps the man was lying all the time, but we had no evidence. We were quite helpless in his hands. The stolid shepherd did not seem to understand a word we said; he stood there behind the defences of his ignorance, and there was only the interpreter to whom we could speak. We went back to the car and bumped our way home to the camp, very thoroughly defeated.

It is not a good idea to go hunting for spies in Macedonia unless you have a number of special qualifications, chief of which are an intimate knowledge of the dialects of the district, and some experience of the ways of the Eastern mind. Without these you will only meet with silence before which you are helpless. You may have your man under your hand, as we had on this occasion, but still he will escape, for to make an arrest without any shred of evidence is mere foolishness and leads to unpleasant letters from the authorities. In this case, as it happened, the escape of the malefactor was only for a little while. A week later our good, friendly shepherd was brought in by another party which included a man who really knew the country, and he was sent down to Salonika to render account of himself. What happened to him I do not know, nor did any of us inquire. The subject was one which we avoided for a long time. And though we sought diligently for our interpreter, we did not see him again. He had disappeared, going perhaps to some other part of the front to protest his devotion to M. Venezelos, and his enthusiasm for the cause of the Allied arms, confident in his security from detection, and not a little contemptuous of those whom he professed to serve.

One feels that contempt everywhere in the country. The people are accustomed to war. Throughout the years they have been subject to

quick alarms; sudden and violent death is a thing which they understand thoroughly. They have seen the light of burning homes and crops; they have mourned, and they have rejoiced. And to them we seem to be strange warriors, foolish and helpless people, without decision or determination.

If when we found that shepherd among his goats one of us had shot him and another had put a bullet through the brain of our interpreter, the people of the land would have appreciated the actions, but our fashion of sending down even known spies to Salonika and affording them a fair trial with full opportunities for friends to lie freely on their behalf—that is not appreciated except as a sign of our amazing madness. The Germans would not be so foolish; they would shoot at once and not even trouble to ask if they had shot the right man—and that is a policy which commands the respect of the Macedonian. To the minds of these people it appears that a nation which pursues such a course is far stronger and more likely to win.

It is so easy to look back on the early stages of a campaign and to say "if we had done this and this, our way would have been less difficult," but the exercise is not often profitable. It is true that if we had dealt in more drastic fashion with spies in the beginning they would not be such a nuisance today, but it does not appear that we could have behaved differently. We have our inbred enthu-

siasm for a fair trial, and we have gone about the earth forcing the fair trial upon peoples who lack appreciation of justice for so many centuries. It does not seem to matter to us that our actions are regarded as foolishness and weakness; it is our custom and we intend to carry it out. And the appearance of the map of the world suggests that our foolishness has been profitable in the end. Perhaps, in spite of the open contempt of the villagers of Macedonia our policy will prove to have been profitable with them also. One can only note the fact that it is very hard as yet to see that it has been anything but a hampering nuisance.

CHAPTER XIV

OUR FEASTING

THERE was once a most experienced warrior who made a song in praise of the Eternal Goodness. In his song he put a little list of benefits which he had received, the things in his life for which he had been most joyously grateful. In that list there is one line which only a soldier can appreciate fully: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. . . . My cup runneth over."

For such a table as one usually finds in the presence of the enemy is a rudimentary affair. There is food and there is drink, and one can say little more about it. It is, of course, adapted to that business of sustaining life and renewing energy which is the primary purpose of all food, but it leaves out of account the other business of refreshing the whole being by a little space of delight and enjoyment. That does not enter into the program. When you sit down by the roadside or in a hasty trench to excavate the contents of a tin of bully beef with a clasp knife and your fingers,

chewing meanwhile at those obdurate biscuits whose only virtue is that they are handy to carry about—when you do these things, you know that you are being nourished, and you do not expect anything else. So, too, when you take a mouthful of luke-warm, chlorinated water from your bottle, you know that your thirst is being slaked and that in consequence you will be able to endure for a little while longer. Perhaps if your temperament were unusually ascetic you would be glad to have a life so shorn of accessories and to have robbed the body of one of its pleasures, but the army as a whole is not made up of ascetics. It is made up of a jolly, full-blooded people who have learnt through hardship and privation to appreciate the good things of life, to desire them and to enjoy them to the full whenever they have an opportunity. This being the case, most of us would be glad to subscribe to the limit of our ability towards a testimonial to the man who is responsible for the Expeditionary Force Canteens. That man, whoever he may be, is the chief benefactor of our armies in the field, and especially of our armies in Macedonia.

No praise can be too high for the work of the department of the Quartermaster-General. Quite apart from the huge business of equipment, that department has to feed our millions on all the fronts day after day, and the task is admirably

accomplished. To every man there comes each day the food required to keep him fit for his work. It comes in generous measure, and in really wonderful variety, considering the difficulties of the business. But the variety cannot be great enough to satisfy the very human craving for an occasional change, for sharp flavors, and for sweetness. With jam and with onions the authorities do their best for our palates, and their achievements are really wonderful, but they do not reach to the end of healthy desire. Filling the gap there comes the work of the Expeditionary Force Canteens, those glorified tuck-shops of the army.

Here and there in Macedonia there stand great marquees with signboards bearing the words of cheer, "Expeditionary Force Canteen." There are not many of them. There is, of course, a big headquarter place in Salonika. There is one at Hortiack, and another, I believe, at Stavros. At the forty-fifth kilo on the Seres road there is a kind of branch establishment, and there is one at Janes. When we reached that place and found that it possessed a canteen, we began to remember the things which we really liked, and mess presidents became suddenly busy collecting money.

Messing is always done by companies in Macedonia. Battalions are so often split up and their parts separated that it would not be possible to run one mess for all the officers of the battalion.

The officers of each company club together, and the unluckiest is appointed mess president. His duty it is to buy anything which he can find to buy, to reason with the cook, to make the meals as delectable as possible, and to endure all day long the reproaches of the little family whose housekeeper he is. Also he has to collect from his family such sums as will pay for the various articles which he has purchased; he has to learn to give soft answers and to prepare balance-sheets, and to possess his soul in patience when somebody says that he has no money and that he will have to wait till the field cashier comes round.

For of course check books are useless in that uncivilized land. No one appreciates the documents, and no one ever thinks of writing them. Money is obtained from the field cashier, a benevolent gentleman who pays periodical visits to the different units, with bags and boxes full of the paper money of Greece. In exchange for a little writing on a scrap of paper he presents you with notes which you carry patiently round the country till the mess president finds an E.F.C., or your servant decides that he would like his wages. Macedonia would break the heart of a spendthrift millionaire. Try as he might he would not be able to find any way of getting rid of his money. You cannot spend in a country in which there is nothing to buy, and in consequence funds are always

plentiful on those rare, delightful occasions when it is discovered that there is a canteen in the neighborhood of the camp.

I brought away with me the price list which I obtained when I went to that canteen at Janes. It is a big, imposing sheet, and it contains the names and prices of over three hundred articles, any one of which the man on active service would dearly love to possess, though he would find it difficult to carry some of them about with him. There are belts and biscuits and butter, cheese, chutney and corkscrews, figs, footballs and fly-papers. Handkerchiefs, honey and haddocks, laces, lard and lentils, sauce, sausages and soap—all these and many, many more delectable things are offered. To glance through that list in a crowded marquee in the heart of Macedonia is to gain a feeling of having come home all at once, with the freedom of the Army and Navy Stores and Selfridge's and Harrods. That feeling only wears off a little when you proceed to work through the ten-deep crowd before the counter, and find out what you can really buy.

For of course at an up-country place you could not expect to find all the three hundred-odd articles in stock at the same time. Transport is too great a problem, and the demand is too fierce The Janes canteen is the center of the hopes of all the units which work on the Doiran front. Day

by day officers and men and limbers come cantering in from the hills which hide the firing line, with long lists of goods required and with bundles of notes in their pockets. No sooner is the canteen stocked than it is emptied again. Packing cases dance through it, hardly pausing on their way, and go rollicking off to cheer the inhabitants of the dug-outs over there where the Bulgar shells are bursting. And in addition to the people in the firing line there are all the units which are scattered about the country, making roads or doing other necessary work within a ten-mile radius. Everyone wants everything he can get, and the job of the canteen manager is not an enviable one.

We did our shopping magnificently in that marquee. The great advantage of the active service life is that it abolishes fads. The man who protested in peace time that if he ate pineapple he came out in pink spots all over quite forgets his affliction when he has not tasted fruit of any kind for three weeks. You can buy what you like within reason and be sure that it will be appreciated. Only once did the canteen disappoint us, and that was when it sold us some tins of horrible little sausages, of the thickness and general consistency of a lead pencil. For the rest the things were good and more than good, and the mules objected sincerely to the load which we packed into the limber to take away with us, for all the officers'

messes of the battalion and the sergeants' mess and the regimental canteen had representatives with that expedition, and after we had finished in the dry goods department we went round to another marquee where cases with fascinating inscriptions were stacked, and proceeded to buy alcoholic beverages.

For the rest of that week the various messes were busy giving vainglorious dinners, and ransacking the battalion and the neighborhood for guests. Any excuse is good enough for a festivity in such a country, and it is something to have an unfamiliar face at the table when you have been feeding with the same four or five men at every meal of every day for weeks on end. Those were the days when the mess cooks of the companies entered into fierce competitions and pestered the mess presidents with suggestions every morning They were days when we professed to grow weary of asparagus and began to criticize lobster and to be fussy over brands of condensed milk. Also we compared brands of stout and whisky and quarrelled over the merits of various liquors—we who, a week before, had been thankful enough for a pint of Macedonian beer wherewith to wash down our rations.

One never knows how things will appear to other people. I am wondering now if all this will seem very greedy and gluttonous, as though

we were only concerned to eat and to drink and had no appreciation of the grim nature of the business to which we were sworn. There may be some who will think of us like that, some stern souls on whose breakfast table there are porridge and kippers and bacon every morning and who always eat mutton because they dislike beef. But it does not occur to me that we need any defence for rejoicing in all those nice things, for getting a great deal of real, keen pleasure out of them, and for thanking our lucky stars that we had come to a place where such things were to be obtained.

A table prepared in the presence of our enemies —a cup running over.

CHAPTER XV

MOSQUITOES AND MALARIA

THERE are few things more irritating than to sit down before a good meal, and to realize with sudden, painful clearness that you cannot eat anything at all, that you must crawl away to your bivouac and lie there very unhappily for the next four or five hours, unable to smoke or to read or to take any real interest in anything. To that annoying fate malaria condemns its victims, over and over again.

I have already explained that when our men were sent to Salonika they were committed to a war against Nature, a war against rock and swamp and wilderness, a war against hill and valley, a war against storm and sun. At the same time they were committed to a war against the mosquito and all its works, chief of which is the spreading of that detestable fever. There are wide spaces in that land where every battalion which occupies the ground is certain to be decimated. You could not be more positively sure of reducing its fighting strength if you were to put it in the most perilous part of the line in one of the big offen-

sives in France. Every battalion which goes into the Struma valley through the summer months knows quite well that it will be losing men day after day, week after week while it remains there, and for long enough after it may be returned to the hills. The same is true of the valleys of the Galika and the Vardar, and of the low land round by Lake Langaza.

Of course precautions are taken. The quinine parade is a standing order in the Salonika armies. Every day the companies are lined up and marched off to the doctor's headquarters. There the men pass in single file, and receive each of them five grains of quinine, with a drink of water to wash it down. How much quinine they consume in the course of a year I should not like to say, for all are served alike. Some of them are very sorrowful about it at first, but in the end it becomes as much a matter of course as the cleaning of the rifle.

Then, too, mosquito netting is issued to the units stationed in dangerous areas, and the camps are constantly inspected by medical dignitaries who refuse to be contented till they are sure that all the men know how to close up their bivouacs with it. Supervision of the mosquito defences is not the least of one's little worries, and it adds seriously to the burden of the medical officer's life. But in spite of these precautions, malaria continues to claim its victims. The quinine parade does not

fortify them against it, nor do the nets protect them. Day by day fresh cases are reported. Day by day the ambulances are taking men off to hospital, while company commanders mourn over their parade states.

The criminal responsible for all this is a mosquito which always hangs its head with a dejected and crime-laden air when it sits down. Mosquitoes which are not engaged in distributing malaria rest quite differently, with their bodies either parallel to the surface to which they are clinging, or so inclined that the head is higher than the tail. But when you find one whose tail is in the air while its head is tucked down, you may know that it is a poison-bearer and an insect to be avoided. If one of those mosquitoes has bitten you the next fortnight or so will prove whether or not malaria has power to touch you.

The amount of trouble those insects give is the proof of the respect with which the Army regards them. The dangerous areas are, of course, the lowlands near water. For this reason the camps are always pitched on the highest possible ground. This may and usually does mean that you are a mile and more from the water supply, but that does not matter in the least. At one time we were very busy along the Galika valley by Karadza Kadi, and every night we climbed to roost high on the hills to the east, and water had to be carried nearly

two miles to the camp. It was a great nuisance, but it was quite unavoidable. It is dangerous even to walk into the valley after sunset, for one would certainly be bitten, and a mosquito bite can be quite as disastrous as a bullet wound. So it was that at sunset we left the low ground to the undisturbed possession of the natives and retired up the rocky steeps to our camp among the scrub, but even so we were not altogether safe. A few of those industrious poison-distributors usually followed us, and the medical officer was in danger of wearing himself out over the supervision of mosquito nets, while the nervous people doubled their dose of quinine and took ten grains daily.

The soldier's business is, of course, a double one. He has to do all possible damage to the enemy, and he has to keep from being damaged unnecessarily himself. It is quite an important part of his work to take care of himself and to preserve himself in good condition for the hour when he may be called upon to go forward into danger and fight. If he fails to take care of himself he is not a good soldier; if he seeks to disable himself he will certainly be court-martialled, and ought to be shot. All these statements are the most elementary maxims of military life, and they are brought to the notice of the soldier very early in his training, and are impressed upon him time after time through the duration of his service.

And they are realized quite clearly. The average soldier knows well enough that he has no right to expose himself uselessly, that he would be doing wrong, for example, if he were to put up his hand above the parapet of the trench in the hope that a stray bullet might give him a trifling wound that would get him a holiday in hospital. But a man may understand this and yet fail to grasp the fact that it is quite as criminal an act to expose himself to the risk of a mosquito bite. It is such a silly thing after all. In the morning there is the red, itching lump on hand or arm or face, but it does not seem important, and it is not easy to grasp the fact that that itching lump may be a far more serious wound than many a bullet hole. For that reason it is not easy to impress on the men the urgent need for protecting themselves against this particular enemy.

The amount of mosquito net that is issued is not always adequate. If it is to afford any protection, it must be most carefully arranged, and sometimes it seems altogether too much trouble to make the arrangements. Moreover, summer nights in Macedonia can be terribly oppressive at times, and sleepers are liable to be restless, to toss and turn and destroy their defences. Through carelessness, through accident, and at times through sheer necessity the way is opened, and the mosquito is given its opportunity.

There are, of course, very many who go unharmed through it all. For some reason which the doctors may understand, they are immune, and the poison does not touch them. They are on parade every day cheerful and undisturbed. But there are the others who are taught swiftly and most uncomfortably the full meaning of the mosquito bite which seemed so small a thing when it was inflicted.

One can never tell where the next victim will be found. After a fortnight in a malarial district there is a touch of excitement to enliven every morning. When the company or the battalion falls in on parade there is always the question—who is missing? It may be an invaluable platoon sergeant, it may the battalion nuisance. The fever does not respect strength, and very often it leaves weakness unharmed. But almost certainly there will be a vacant place somewhere or other, and someone will be shivering dismally under piled blankets, or gasping for breath and dreaming of cool drinks, and absorbing large doses of quinine.

Sometimes a man will have so severe an attack that there will be nothing for it but to pack him off to hospital at once. On the other hand there are many cases when after two or three days the victim will be back at work, thinking that the trouble has passed away, and that he will not have to fall out of his place in the ranks. There

are some men, especially among those who have suffered from the fever before in other countries who are able to carry on. I knew one major who was helpless for two or three days out of every month, but did contrive to remain with his battalion and to get through his work. And there are others who are forced into hospital every now and then, but find their way back every time. Others again fight against the trouble for weeks but are at the last driven out of the country by it, to finish their soldiering in other lands.

Fighting malaria is not an amusement that can be recommended. The tricks of it are so numerous. Sometimes an attack will come on with due warning which gives time for steps to be taken to reduce the fury of it, and at other times the onslaught will be so sudden that it has developed into an undeniable fact in two minutes. It is quite possible to sit down to a meal feeling perfectly well, and even to get through one course, and then to be compelled to leave the rest and go away to put up as well as may be with the discomfort of the following hours.

And of course that leads in time to weakness which becomes more and more pronounced. Very many of our men in Macedonia have rebelled so sturdily against the idea of giving in that they have struggled on, week after week. They have refused to attend the sick parade or to confess that

there was anything the matter with them until at last their weakness has betrayed them, and their trouble has been discovered simply because it was not possible for them to work or to march any more. They had realized that ideal to which only the best soldiers can ever attain. They had gone on while their limbs would carry them, disdaining to yield while strength remained to set one foot before the other. And there is something that hangs between the comic and the utterly pathetic in their disgust when they find that it is indeed the end of endeavor for them for the time.

Doubtless those who are in authority over us know what malaria has cost our armies in Macedonia. Whether or not they realized what that cost would be when the adventure was planned is another of those questions which may possibly be answered in the future. For the present it is enough to say that it must be taken into account in any consideration of the work and achievements of the forces which were sent to that uncomfortable land. It must be remembered as scrupulously as must the nature of the country and all that difficulty of transport of which I have written. It is another of the big troubles with which General Sarrail and his subordinate commanders have had to contend, and it is not possible to do justice to any commander unless you make full allowance

for his difficulties, and the critics who sit so easily at home and write of what should have been accomplished in Macedonia must, in common honesty, give due consideration to all the conditions which have surrounded the work of the forces sent to Salonika.

And a sick soldier is something more than a man absent from his place. He is so definitely and defiantly a nuisance. He is a person who must be tended and cared for. There must be people to look after him, ambulances to carry him about, lorries to bring up the special things which he requires. Multiply him by a few thousands, and you must have an elaborate, well-staffed organization at work, doing all kinds of secondary jobs which would not be there to be done if there were no sickness. With one hand the fever has withdrawn men from their work by thousands; with the other it has forced on the commanders the necessity of maintaining in the country a large number of non-combatants. Any increase in the number of its non-combatant members weakens an army, and more especially in such a country as this where it is so difficult a matter to bring up the necessary supplies.

That is a point which is frequently overlooked, and yet it is of the highest importance. Before you go to war in any country it is essential to know what amount of manpower will be absorbed

in taking care of the fighters, and especially if it is difficult country to which all supplies must be carried a long distance by sea. For as the difficulty of the country increases, so will the number of men employed on transport work increase, and food must be brought for each of these as well as for the men who do the actual fighting. And if in addition it is a country where much sickness is to be expected, the number of essential non-combatants will be greater than ever. The best army, from the point of view of a commander, is one in which a hundred per cent of its members are fighters. The lower the percentage of fighters, the more difficult it becomes to win battles, or, indeed, to go into battle at all. And all those heroic, necessary people who belong to the medical service of the Salonika forces are a source of weakness to those forces, even while it is true that without them no military operations would be possible in the land.

CHAPTER XVI

THESE ARE THE HEROES

THE whole body of the facts and figures concerning the hospital organization in Macedonia is in the keeping of the authorities, and there it must remain till the time when the war shall have become no more than a memory and all the truth of the world's effort may be told. In those coming days we shall learn, perhaps, the number of the people who were engaged in that service, the number of the marquees and ambulances which were kept so constantly busy, and the cost of that great work of caring for the sick and wounded. Certain it is that no ordinary member of the Salonika expeditionary force could even guess at the extent of the labor or the magnitude of the means which had to be employed to deal with the task.

We who belonged to the fighting units could only know that wherever we went the Geneva cross was never very far away. Ever and again as we marched through the land we would find it flying over some compact little camp in a fold

of the hills. On all the roads there were the ambulances hurrying to and fro. On that railway which runs from Salonika to Janes and beyond there is the hospital train carrying down its load to the sea every day, and in Salonika Bay the green and white hospital ships are coming and going all the time. In Macedonia you may be far from newspapers, from tobacco which a reasonable being can smoke, from the more pleasing varieties of food and from all the minor comforts of life, but you are never very far from some kind of a hospital.

The broad lines of the organization are roughly these. The medical firing line is, of course, held by the medical officers of the battalions, who have their orderlies and stretcher-bearers to assist them. The medical officer has his Aid Post in the camp, where he can attend to the sick, where his drugs and implements are stored, where he can remove offending teeth, administer quinine or that terror of the Army which is known as Number Nine, and take the temperature of the latest victim of malaria. Frequently he has also an ambulance drawn by horses or mules which accompanies the unit on its travels, but of course this has to be left behind when the nature of the country makes wheeled transport impossible and all the luggage and supplies have to be carried on pack mules. On these occasions the fate of the individual who is taken

ill on the march is unhappy. If he collapses by the wayside there is nothing to carry him, except the stretchers, and it is necessary to make him understand quite clearly that at all cost he must drag himself along to the end of the day's journey.

In the second line come the field ambulances. They are mobile, and it is their business to go with troops on the move, to pick up as many of the casualties as the battalions cannot keep with them, and to hand them on in due season. The ordinary field ambulance consists of a few ambulance wagons and a small camp. If the unit to which it is attached is moving through difficult country with pack transport, the ambulance generally looks for an easy way round, so that at the end of the day or at some time during the next day it may be ready to take over any men who have fallen ill. The soldier who is hurt or attacked by fever or dysentery is treated first at the Aid Post of his own unit. If his condition does not improve and he is unable to journey on with the rest, he is handed over to the field ambulance where he may be treated again for a little while if his illness is only slight. If he does not get better, or if the ambulance becomes unduly crowded, he is passed on to the third line.

This is composed of the casualty clearing stations. They are permanent camps established at the most advanced position possible. Thus there

is one at Stavros and another at Lahana and a third at Janes. They are really miniature hospitals, and to be sent into one of them is to experience the unimaginable luxury of sleeping once more between sheets and on a real bed. The sufferer may remain in one of these stations for a long time, if he is considered too ill to make the journey to a hospital, or if it is thought that he will very soon be well again. Behind the casualty clearing stations, and especially on the Seres road, there are occasional small field hospitals which receive and keep for a little while those who are not well enough to make the whole journey back to the base, or who are only slightly ill and may be expected to recover within a week or so. Tucked away out of sight near these little hospitals you will always find a graveyard, a little space of ground very carefully fenced and cleared, with the neat, sad mounds in precise order, and the little white crosses with their brief inscriptions, bearing witness that some have not lived long enough even to die within sight of the sea. That always seems the hardest, cruelest part of war, that finding of death in the safe places behind the lines. There is nothing unseemly in the death that is found in the course of ordinary duty; that is all in the contract and it is not a very grievous thing. But it is hard that when a man has lived long enough to find safety with his face turned homeward death should over-

take him. There is indeed a crescendo of sadness, and if those graves behind the lines are pitiful, still more so are those which have been dug in Malta, that island of hospitals, and most pitiful of all is the death which comes on the hospital ship as the coast of England lifts and rises from the sea.

No one who has played any part, however small, in war would seek to emphasize the sadness of it. That is not our job. If it must be done, it can very well be left to newspaper correspondents and others whose business it is to watch from a distance and comment on the course of things. If I have mentioned these sorrowful, remote graves it is simply because it is necessary to insist that they would be more numerous by far if it were not for the infinite care of the medical service. The day of miracles is not past. If you could go to those hospitals which stand about Salonika, if you could see the battles that are fought day and night through all the hours across the broken bodies of our men, you would understand. If you could work your way down as I have done through field ambulance and clearing station to the base, and lie day after day in one of those long, bright wards, you would know that wonders are still performed upon the earth.

From the moment a man is carried away from his unit he is surrounded by such unceasing tender-

ness, by such a wealth of devotion and skill. It is bad, of course, for those who find their trouble on the Struma front, and must come back down all the tormenting length of the Seres road, but every possible measure is taken to keep them from pain and suffering, and if they are very weak the journey is broken so that it may be made in easy stages, with rests in between at the little hospitals which stand by the side of the road. In those hospitals there are lavish care and unflagging attention to cherish and fan the little spark of strength that it may glow through all the body, giving power to endure the next stage of the journey.

No praise can be too high for the men and women who are bound to that service. How they find power and the heart to carry on with their work I do not know, but their zeal is unfailing, and their cheerful kindness goes shining on through all the days and nights. There was one day when I came to Sarigöl, that unhappy village which lies next below Janes. The hospital train had just come into the station on its journey down to Salonika. There were the long carriages, and the vans that had been fitted with cots; one could see the forms of the men as they lay in the comfortable shade, and the orderlies hurrying to and fro. At the door of one of the vans two nurses paused for a moment, looking out. I had not seen an Englishwoman for months, and there was something in the mere sight

of them that took one by the throat. They stood there, just a moment, looking out over that alien land. It must have been very familiar to them, the village with its queer, mud-plastered hovels, the tiny church with the great bearded black-robed priest lumbering down towards it, and the parched plain rolling away to the mountains. They stood there, and one would have said that they were a little weary, weary of the heat and the plague of the flies and the unending labor of their life, and for the moment they were forgetting to smile. There was a call from the shadows inside the van and they turned, both together, and the smiles were back on their faces, not the forced smiles of duty, but shining smiles that told of the kindness burning within.

Of the trains by which a man journeys in the course of his life there are a few, here and there, which he remembers with gratitude and joy. We have all of us our memories of the happy trains, which carried us so pleasantly to gladness, and not the least of mine is that hospital train which runs from Janes to Salonika. For there came the day when in my turn I was put on that train with blankets and pillows to comfort me, with pleasant food and drink to hearten me, and with liberty to lie quite still and watch Macedonia, that admirable country, sliding past as I journeyed so smoothly down to the sea. The nurses were busy

in another part of the train, but there were the soft-stepping orderlies, quick to anticipate every want and desire, and once when we stopped for a quarter of an hour at the station called Salamanli there came a small, delightful music. Before that hour and since I have cursed gramophones with the heartiest sincerity, but at that time there was nothing but delight, and one did not realize that a machine had anything to do with it but thought only that four entirely admirable people were singing Gilbert and Sullivan quartettes with skill and enthusiasm. In such comfort and serene unhappiness one could have journeyed for days on end, and that train stands to me for a symbol of what has been and is continually being done for our men when sickness or wounds cry halt to their campaigning. All that can be bought for their healing is purchased and brought from the ends of the earth, and with it there comes a devotion which could never be bought, for which no money that was ever coined could pay. Some of those orderlies of the Royal Army Medical Corps are heroes of the most dogged and determined order. It is not for them to do one flaming deed in the full tide of battle and thus to win splendor for their names. It is their part to go on day after day doing unpleasant things with cheerful readiness—day after day. And with them there are the doctors who have left their easy homes, and the nurses

who have come from all the lands to play their part, to bear their portion of the burden.

As on that excellent train, so in the hospitals round Salonika they are doing their work with the same unfailing devotion. The staffs of our hospitals everywhere deserve all that can be given them of honor and reward, but those who have served in Salonika deserve even more than the others. It is so unpleasant a town. In Alexandria or Cairo or Malta it is at least possible to escape in leisure hours and to go to cheerful, jolly places and to forget pain for a little while, but I do not know what there can be of pleasant recreation in that town which stands looking away towards Olympus. Life in those hospitals must be a most unmitigated form of exile, with none of the ameliorations of a civilized life to make it tolerable. Our nurses there have known what it is to be spat upon in those filthy streets, and there is nothing in the streets to make them worth visiting. It is just a matter of work and sleep, with a considerable chance of sickness thrown in for the sake of variety. Sometimes they will tell you of friends across in Alexandria, and of the letters they write telling of the good time they are having. For my own part I do not love Alexandria at all, but I know that there are shop windows with interesting things to examine, that there are wide, sunswept streets, and English people passing to and fro, and women

in pretty frocks, and a most admirable place for tea near to the top of Rue Cherif Pacha, on the left-hand side. And anyhow one would rather be anywhere on earth than in Salonika.

But they do not complain, those brave, kind women—they work their miracles instead. You may lie in your place day after day and watch how they bring men back from the very gates of death. It is a fine thing to see, that relentless struggle for a life. You may have enough knowledge to appreciate it, to know how small are the chances of recovery, how it must all depend on care, science having done all in its power. And you note every morning a little improvement, a little accession of strength. There is a touch of healthier color in the poor, worn face, a little light of interest in the eyes; presently there is movement and reasonable speech, and the dark shadow passes away. By the time they are making ready to take him to the hospital ship, you know with exact and definite knowledge that only unfailing service has prevented the erection of another of those little crosses which mark the resting places of the men who could not live long enough to get home.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WAY OUT OF THE LAND

IN my early days in the country, when we lived for a time on the high plateau by Hortiack, we would sit outside our huts in the evening and watch the shipping in the bay with an interest only to be understood by those who have been in exile. It is some mitigation to be able to look at a ship. It stands for freedom, freedom to go out across the seas of the world and come at last to your own place. One is apt, I suppose, to grow rather sentimental in those distant places. After all it is almost the only luxury.

There would be ships of all nations with strange and violent designs painted along their sides, and there would be the brave dingy tramps which sail so fearlessly under our own flag, longing for a chance to settle a submarine. War boats of every kind would be there, and transports moving up from the sea with their burden of troops. And most beautiful of all the hospital ships, painted green and white with the great red crosses promising to all who sailed on them a space of rest and peace,

a refuge prepared from all the weariness and tumult of war.

It will not, perhaps, be hard to understand why we looked at those green and white ships with an intense, peculiar affection. Holidays have no great place in the scheme of things in Macedonia. The men in France have their leave to look forward to. They know that every few months they will get their days of release. They will be able to cross to England, to be with their own people, to walk the streets of their towns and be in the keeping of their homes. But there is no such prospect in front of the man who lands at Salonika. Very, very rarely it happens that a man who has been in that country for a year is miraculously presented with permission to spend a fortnight at home, but those instances are so scarce as to be negligible. One you get to Salonika you have every chance of staying there for the duration of the war unless the authorities should decide in some moment of wisdom that the expedition is unprofitable and that our armies would be more useful elsewhere. That being the case we should have been more than human if we had not realized that those hospital ships offered our only chance of a holiday, our only hope of finding our way home.

I can see that I shall have to write this rather carefully or some petulant pacifist or one of the other enemies of our nation will be twisting my

words to mean that our men in Macedonia are discontented and mutinous and seeking every opportunity to escape. That, of course, would be the most damnable libel on a gallant and devoted body of men that could ever be devised by the most lying and malignant Hun. There is the widest possible difference between realizing that a thing is desirable and setting to work to obtain it. We had come to the country to do something, and the fact that that something had turned out to be monotonous and entirely unlike our dream of war was irritating, but it had to be done and we meant to do it. At the same time it was only natural that we should realize that it would be a happy thing to journey down to the sea on one of those pretty ships, and that, whatever their sufferings, those who made that journey were enviable people.

That after all is the great consolation of the soldier in a vast citizen army such as this which the British Empire has created in the hour of its necessity. It is rather different with the born soldier, the man who loves fighting for its own sake, the man who would have been in the army in any event and was probably serving before the war broke out. He is the spiritual descendant of those old adventurers who in the distant past left their own land when it was at peace and went to serve in the armies of other nations in a life-long quest of conflict. Such a man is liable to fume

and fret when for a time he is laid aside. There are no ties of home to bind him. There are no distant voices calling to him. One land is as good as another, one face as fair as another and the camp is his chosen habitation. But such as he do not at any time form the bulk of a nation, especially of such a nation as our own where the fighting has for so long been in the hands of professionals and the born adventurers go naturally to the sea. Our armies must inevitably contain a large precentage of men who cannot know real happiness and content away from their homes. Always they must hear the little whispering of remembered voices; before their eyes there must always be the vision of some little house in which, for them, all the excellence and beauty of living are contained.

For these men there is a comfort to sustain them through all the pain of wounds and sickness. In the hour of darkness and dereliction there is light. How often has the story been told of our lads in France when, with their bodies shattered by great wounds, a smile has come to wipe the pain from their faces and they have controlled their quivering lips to whisper, "Me for Blighty." And if that consolation is effectual in France, can you not realize how far more effectual it must be on the distant battlefields where the man had no hope of seeing his home while the war endured and even,

it might be, for many months after peace returned to the earth? If you think of our men of the Territorials and the New Armies who have been in India, in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Macedonia since a few months after the war began, can you wonder that they think longingly of the hospital ships?

That is not wonderful at all. The thing which is wonderful is that, in spite of the longing, there should be such consistent and sustained efforts to avoid making that desired journey. It is and will remain wonderful that our men who are sick or wounded in those far lands should so often insist that there is nothing the matter with them and that they are perfectly well able to carry on. I remember one man, a gray-headed fellow of forty. He had been telling me of trouble in his home, of sickness and the failing health of his wife. His heart was torn with anxiety and he was in a mood to curse Macedonia, and the day that led him to the recruiting office. A week later I saw there was something wrong with him. By all the signs malaria had laid hold of him, but he stood up before me, shaken as he was with the fever, and lied to me, declaring that he was perfectly well, and it was a fortnight before weakness conquered him and he had to be taken away. And he was only one of many, of very, very many. Over and over again you may see it, out there on the far fringes of the war. I have seen it in Egypt, down

on the edge of the eternal sand, I have seen it in hospitals in Alexandria, and across the length and breadth of Macedonia. "I'm all right," the story runs. "Why don't they send me back?" "See you again in a week, boys," said one of our men as they carried him away to the Field Ambulance, and we heard later that he died a week after the hospital ship brought him to England.

But I began this chapter with the intention of telling of the way out of Macedonia, the way of the green and white ships over which so many thousands have passed, not through any skill of the enemy but simply by reason of the malice of the land. It might be as well to carry out that original intention.

We who sat on that plateau under the shadow of Kotos used to watch the hospital ships and to make small jokes among ourselves as to when our turns for the journey would come, and what the trouble would be that would carry us out of the land. We went down to the plains and the characteristic troubles of the country began to pick and choose among us, selecting their victims with fantastic uncertainty, and those poor little jests were carried on. "Hullo, booked your passage on a green and white?" would be the question put to any one who turned up in the morning with a strikingly yellow complexion. "Give my regards to Leicester Square," would be the last words

called after the ambulance as it trotted away, carrying someone who protested with violence that he was perfectly well. To one after another the summons came, and at last it was my turn and I was carried, very much surprised but very comfortable, down to a hospital on the edge of the sea.

The things which happen to the soldier who reaches one of those admirable hopitals which stand about Salonika depend altogether on the extent and nature of his trouble. Some, of course, get better in two or three weeks. They have that space of rest, of the luxury of sleeping in proper beds and of unusual food, and then they go quite cheerily back to their units. Others improve a little but not so much as might be desired, and one day a very senior medical officer comes round and declares that they must be sent to Malta. Others again are obviously so ill or so badly wounded that they will never be able to serve in Macedonia again, but they, too, are sent to Malta, for it is not the custom now to send people straight home to England from Salonika. Everyone goes first to that island which has been turned into a tremendous hospital, where under the old shadow of the Knights of St. John the work of healing is carried out on a scale more spacious than anything of which they in their time could dream.

So there is every now and then in those hospitals

a jolly day of packing and preparation. There are men who have had to lie without moving for weeks, and there are smiles on their faces while the orderlies run to and fro and baggage reappears from the stores in which it has been locked away. Others are stumbling about on crutches, and others again walk proudly if a little unsteadily up and down, saying good-bye to their companions of a little while, and collecting messages from nurses to be given to nurses in Malta. The motor ambulances are at the door and presently they roll away down the long road which leads to the quay where the green and white tender is waiting. Out in the bay the ship is ready to receive its happy passengers and all day long the stream of feeble but smiling people is passing over the gangways.

There is one view of all these towns of exile which is fit to take its place among the loveliest views in the world—the view over the stern as the departing ship bears one away. That view of Alexandria convinced me of the splendor of the sweltering town, that view of Salonika left with me a vision of enduring loveliness. Later on that view of Valletta was to leave with me a memory of sunlit beautiful age, enduring still to serve the generations.

Salonika from the sea has a power and glory of its own. One is away from the detestable streets and the utterly alien people. It is no longer pos-

sible to be afflicted by the abominable smells or deafened by the crash and clatter of iron tires across the primitive paving of the road. It lies, pierced by the tall fingers of the minarets, with trees breaking the monotony of the tall buildings, with the hills rising very nobly behind it and with the excellent beauty of Kòtos standing as a banner to the east. All the unpleasant things are forgotten, and as the picture fades into the majesty of the mountains one can even think of it kindly. And to be able to think kindly of Salonika is a great miracle. Presently there is the glory of Olympus in the west and there comes a little rise and lift beneath the feet as the ship begins to feel the power of the open sea.

Those were the days before the *Britannic* and the *Braemar Castle* were sunk, before the Hun had declared to an outraged world his determination to sink hospital ships. In those days one of the green and white boats was a kind of Ark, a place of refuge where one escaped for a time from all the circumstances of war. When we went on board our revolvers and ammunition were taken from us. What became of the ammunition I do not know. It may have been sent ashore, or it may have been dropped over the side. The revolvers were locked away and we did not see them again until we reached the journey's end. The Hun tales of the abuse of hospital ships are on the same level

as the rest of the lies of that mendacious race. There has never been anything of the kind; we have played the game all through.

We went out upon the sea and the night came down and received us, and we thought of other nights when the transports went stealthily through the darkness. Through all the hours men would be standing with loaded rifles ready to act on the first sign of danger. There would be the closed and blinded portholes and the stifling air of the cabins that killed the power of sleep and drove us in desperation on to the dark and silent decks. There we would stand, peering out into the dark of perilous night, searching for the ghostly form of the little destroyer that tried the way before us.

All that was past. We went now splendid with innumerable lights, green and white still through the darkness. Through the wide open ports there came the delicate air of the night to cleanse and refresh our unhappy bodies and bring them comfort. Those gleaming lights proclaimed to all who might pass the fact that we were apart from the main occupation of the peoples of the earth, that from the heart of the conflict we had come to the place of peace. In those wide, air-swept wards we slept as those may sleep whose travail is accomplished, whose strife is at an end.

It was on our second evening that the contrast between our lot and the lot of all others who

went out on the waters upon their lawful occasions was most violently brought home to us. Far away as darkness fell a light became visible. When we went on deck after dinner it was flaming high, and we crowded to the rail staring at it with wondering eyes. Presently we gathered that it was a sort of a signal light—I have forgotten its official name—a thing which would float on the water and burn for many hours. It was certain that in the neighborhood there would be people in boats, awaiting deliverance.

There was, as it turned out, only one boat. The story was quite on the usual lines. A tramp steamer was working up to Salonika when the submarine found it and fired the torpedo without warning. The skipper had remained by his ship to the last in the boat which was found, while the rest of the crew had been picked up an hour after the torpedo did its work.

We swung up through the night, slowed and stopped, and there, far below us was the little boat, dancing on the easy waves while our lights fell across the pale, upturned faces. A ladder slipped down our side, and the little figures were clambering up. Last of all came the skipper, hugging all sorts of possessions under his arms, and the little boat slipped past us and away into the darkness as our engines awoke once more, for a hospital ship may perform no act of salvage, not

even so much as the hoisting of a little boat out of the sea. It was left, to be a waif and a stray upon the waters—that thing which men had made so carefully, with such pride and skill of craftsmanship. Far below the waves were steering to and fro above the steamer.

And above something more than the steamer. The captain was a stolid, red-faced man who spoke very little and very rarely; but once to a few of us he broke his silence. "I wouldn't have cared only they got my chief engineer," he said. "We'd been together the best part of twenty years. He was asleep in his bunk when they came along. Killed him like a dog. No warning, no chance to send him a word. The bloody swine—the bloody swine." It may be that in years to come we shall be exhorted not to hate the Germans any more, but you will never tear that hatred out of the hearts of the men who go down to the sea in ships and have seen the foul treachery of the Hun upon the deep waters.

But we at least journeyed in safety and came in due season to Malta, which has become a sort of Bournemouth to Macedonia. Green and white ships are passing in and out of the complicated harbor of Valletta all the time, bringing the invalids to be cured. In that harbor we saw one or two interesting things which must not be described, and several others which have been described to

death already, and when at last we were safely on land again we found that Lord Methuen, who is Governor of the island in these days, had come to meet us. Also he had come to inform us that a new War Office order had come out stating that moustaches need not be worn any more. We were properly grateful. It is not often that you have a Field Marshal to give you directions about shaving.

Malta is a pleasing island, but I did not set out to write a book about it, and it only comes in now as a suburb of Salonika, so I need say nothing of the interesting and curious things we saw there, neither of the goats, nor of the curious hats of the native ladies, nor of those portable farms which you can pick up and carry away in a cart. The progress of the soldier who arrives at Valletta from Macedonia is that he goes first of all to a hospital and remains there till he is considered to be well on the way to recovery. Then he is passed to a convalescent camp where he spends a few jolly weeks of comparative idleness till one fine day he is packed off to an embarkation camp where he is reminded that he is a soldier and that he knows all about forming fours and route marches and the rest. Finally he is put on to a transport—not a green and white this time—and goes back to make some more discoveries about the Seres road.

But a minority do not go back. Somehow or

other they cannot contrive to get better. The clear skies, the pleasant breezes and the fine air will not accomplish the cure. The weeks pass and they are still feeble. Their wounds still trouble them, or fever still comes to shake and torment them, and at last the decision is taken. They must go home. It is not for them to remain any longer under the indescribable blue of the Mediterranean sky. It would not be good for them to see Salonika again; their time of service in that unhappy land is over. They are free to dream once more of gray skies above a gray and turbulent sea, of green hills and the depth of the secret woods and of all the dim loveliness of our own land.

So there came a day when a very happy party of us went once more to Valletta and found a hospital ship waiting for us, a ship which went in time threading the maze of the harbor, bearing us away across the open sea to a little secret bay where a green and white monster was waiting to receive us. The *Aquitania* is not rushing millionaires from one side of the Atlantic to the other in these days of war. She has something else to do, and her great halls are full of small white beds. Nine shiploads of the sick passed across the gangways from the lesser vessels which serve in the Mediterranean, and then the mighty engines were at work. A little space of days and nights and we were riding the Atlantic swell that swings

through the gate of Gibraltar. Again a little while and England rose out of the sea to greet and comfort her returning sons.

PART II

CHAPTER I

The Prelude

NOWHERE in the world is it possible to find a tract of land so important and so little understood as the Balkan Peninsula. Its importance can be judged by the fact that through the ages it has been continually ravaged by war; but it is hard to find anything to prove how little it has been understood. Before the war intelligent and educated people were in the habit of looking very wise and nodding gravely whenever the Balkan states were mentioned, but I doubt if one in fifty of them could have given a clear account of the recent history of Adrianople or Scutari or of Salonika itself. And yet it is not too much to say that in the story of those three towns there is to be found the immediate preface to the war which occupies the world today.

What I have to do in this chapter is to give as brief and as clear an account as possible of the condition of affairs in the Peninsula immediately before the war. To deal with the matter in detail would

require quite a number of large, dull books. For my own part I should hate to have to write a full history of the Balkans, and I suspect that most people would hate to have to read it. Many admirable works on the subject have appeared in many countries, and to them all in serch of fuller information must be referred. All that I can do is to give the broad outlines, but if they are properly grasped a big step forward will have been taken.

The first fact to be noted is contained in a short sentence. It is this: It is not possible to draw an accurate ethnographic map of the Balkan Peninsula. The races have become so mixed that it is not possible to say of one part of the country that here you will find Turks, here Greeks, here Serbs, and here Bulgars. It is not even possible to say that there is a line between the districts occupied by the Christians and those held by Moslems. Salonika itself, in the days when I knew it, was eloquent of the confusion which lay in all the country behind. As you came up from the sea the outstanding feature was formed of the innumerable minarets of the mosques; later you discovered that the town contained Christian churches of great age, and later still you discovered that it was largely inhabited by Spanish Jews. In all that country to the north of the town, of which I have written in the first part of this book, there

is so fine a confusion of tongues that a man would need a share of the gift of Pentecost to enable him to speak to each of its inhabitants in his own tongue. There are villages where a knowledge of Arabic will carry you through. In other places you must have Greek, and in others you will be helpless without the Slav dialects. For all official purposes French is, of course, adequate, and it is possible to find French-speaking people in the most remote districts. But such discoveries are merely a matter of luck.

There is, then, this confusion. Broadly speaking it may be said to have arisen from the fact that the Balkans lie across the route which leads from Asia to Europe. The whole area is like nothing so much as that part of the seashore which lies between the high and low water marks. Here the tides of invaders have swept up, and here, receding, they have left jetsam to mark their brief abiding. There have been, too, cross-currents sweeping up from the East, so that the Slav has left the stamp of his presence. And far back in the darkness of the past there came tribes who made for themselves homes among the great mountains of this land. Looking back now we can perceive, as it were, dim, tremendous shapes moving to and fro, but there is little that can be stated with any certainty except that in the dawn of our own age there were these peoples inhabiting the land, hav-

ing great traditions and ambitions of their own, and certain more or less fixed antagonisms.

The chief of those antagonisms was, of course, that which parted the Christian from the Turk. In this area the Turkish invasion found its chief harvest and eventually spent itself. There was the long period when the Moslem held the land, and the races which we know today were condemned to a fugitive existence in the remote valleys. It might, perhaps, have been thought that such a community of peril and persecution would have bound all the Christian peoples together, but they had divisions even among themselves. There were the Roumanians, for example, a Latin race surviving from the last days of the Roman empire. They had nothing in common with the Slavs who lay to the west of them, or with the Greeks. There were the divisions between the Roman and the Greek churches; and, as though these were not enough, here were presently to be divisions among the Greeks. There came the time when the Powers of Europe began to consider these divisions and to consider how they could be turned to their own advantage.

And here I have to write of things which are hard for an Englishman to understand, and must, I imagine, be even harder for an American to grasp. There came into play all that jealousy and suspicion of each other which seem to be inevit-

able when nations are only separated from one another by lines drawn on a map. Austria and Russia sat watching each other, and on the flank there was Italy, and far to the north the Prussian state was considering the road to the East. All these were regarding the Balkans and one another; all had determined that they must have a voice in the happenings on the Peninsula. There came to Germany the dream of Mitteleuropa, the State which was to stretch from the Baltic to the Persian Gulf. Austria, filled with fears of Russia and of her own Eastern subjects, became a willing ally. Russia herself, reaching out to a port on warm water beyond the Dardanelles, took the Slav races of the Peninsula under her special protection; and Italy, remembering how in the past she had been despoiled by Austria, became very watchful. The stage was set for the tremendous drama in which we all are playing a part today.

Farsighted and thorough, Germany began to prepare for the end which she desired. There was a coming and going of German agents through the Balkans and there was an amount of diplomatic work whose purpose was hardly realized at the time. There is no need to trace the course of it here; it is enough to point out that at the beginning of the war the thrones of Bulgaria, Greece and Roumania were all occupied by men who had every reason to favor the German cause. But beyond

all this was the progress made in Turkey. The Kaiser took the Moslem races of the world under his special protection and his servants worked unceasingly to prove to the Turks that in all Europe they had only one friend. German officers took charge of the Turkish army and shaped it according to their own ideas. Krupps' factory made guns for that army, and advice and aid in military matters was to be had for the asking. There came at last the projected Berlin-Bagdad railway and the heart of the German idea was written in letters which all the world might have read if all the world had been able in those remote days of peace to look at such matters as we can look at them today.

If, then you take Balkan affairs as they stood ten years ago, they were roughly as follows: In the first place, Turkey still ruled the major portion of the Peninsula. If you can find a map of that time you will see that Turkey in Europe was quite considerable, and to all outward appearance important. But behind all this appearance of power there was the developing strength of those which we may call the native Balkan states. Both Serbia and Bulgaria had memories of the past and ambitions for the future, and in their remote and limited areas they were preparing for a struggle which should restore to them the glories of the past and establish them in splendor. Greece, too, had visions of power, and Roumania shared the general

desire for the expulsion of the Turk. But in addition to these ideas which were flourishing in the Peninsula there were the ideas of the European Powers. Russia was determined, mainly for her own sake, to protect the Slav races, and Germany was equally determined to secure for herself a path through the Balkans to the Persian Gulf. Believing in the permanence of the Turk, she sought chiefly to establish herself in power in Turkey, but she did not neglect the other nations. Everywhere her agents were at work. By countless devious methods which no one else understood or in the least appreciated before the war, she was making friends for herself in all the countries. Her soldiers were at work making maps so that when we came to Salonika and sought for maps of the land there were only the German maps to be had. Later on, our own Survey provided us with excellent maps, but in the earlier days we had only those others, loaded with detail, and frequently inaccurate.

Into all this atmosphere of planning and plotting there came a thing which, rightly handled, might have prevented this war. From the dreams and desires of the Balkan races there arose an attempt to give form and substance to those dreams. There came into being the Balkan League; the Turk was, for all practical purposes, bundled out of Europe, and for a little while it must have seemed to the

rulers of Prussia that all their work was foolishness and their labor vain.

There is no space for a history of the Balkan War of 1912, or even of the intensely interesting series of events which led up to it. Years of patient labor went to the forming of the League. There were all sorts of old jealousies and suspicions to be overcome. The Balkan nations had a fine crop of grievances against one another, and the question of Macedonia itself was enough to set them at enmity one with another—as most unhappily it did at a later date. In Macedonia more than anywhere else the confusion of races is so acute that each of the nations can put forward some sort of an ethnographic claim to at least a part of the district. Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece were all thinking longingly of Salonika, and they did not trust each other. And yet the League was formed, owing chiefly to the skill of that great statesman, M. Venezelos. The nations made their preparations with incessant toil and sacrifice. The movement was utterly and intensely popular, and all classes were on fire for its success. There came Turkey's war with Italy in Tripoli and it seemed that the time was ripe. The last preparations were swiftly and most secretly made.

At the last moment the Powers of Europe became aware that something really serious was taking place, and they joined in one of the most

preposterous performances of which diplomacy has ever been guilty. An ultimatum was presented to Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria forbidding them to fight and assuring them that if they did they would not be allowed to profit by any victory they might win. The King of Montenegro declared war on Turkey on the day that that priceless document reached him, and his allies were close behind him. In a month Turkey in Europe had ceased to exist. Four tiny nations with a total population of some ten millions had defeated a Power with twenty-five million inhabitants. There remained to Turkey only Scutari, Adrianople and Constantinople.

There followed the business of dividing the spoils. There was all that tract of conquered territory to be disposed of, and there were the four allies to share it. Also, there was Roumania, who came forward with a claim for compensation for her forbearance in remaining neutral. And beyond all these there were the Powers of Europe, full of suspicion of one another and determined to secure that no advantage should be gained by any possible enemies. Austria, Italy, Russia and especially Germany were determined that the partition of the possessions of the Turk should be settled on lines agreeable to themselves, and diplomacy was at work once more.

To describe the happenings of the months which

followed the war would be a long and unpleasant business. Delegates from the nations met in London and argued endlessly. The agents of the Powers were at work also with all manner of subterranean influences. Germany, in particular, was urging Bulgaria along a course which could have only one end.

It is necessary to glance at the position of Bulgaria. She went into the war with a great desire for Salonika. She needed such a port, and there was also the fact that that part of Macedonia which lies between the town and her borders does contain a number of Bulgars. It happened, however, that in the course of the war, the part allotted to her took her away from that goal of her desire and forced her to do most of her fighting in the direction of Constantinople. The actual occupation of Salonika was effected by the Greeks. Shortly after they had entered the town, a Bulgar army appeared and desired to take part in its occupation. Even then, in the midst of the campaign, the allies nearly came to blows, and it was made very clear that Greece meant to keep the town.

Serbia, too, put in a claim to the place. The Powers decided that she must not be permitted a port on the Adriatic—here again the hand of Prussian diplomacy was at work—and she desired an outlet to the sea. The Greeks had their dream of

a realm which should stretch to Constantinople, and they had no idea of giving up the town which they had occupied.

Left to themselves, or aided by wise and honest counsel, it is possible that the Balkan States might have worked out a solution of the problem, but that was the last thing desired by the Prussian statesmen. A Balkan League of nations, living at amity one with another meant the end of the dream of Mitteleuropa. It put a barrier aross the way to the Persian Gulf, and spelt the failure of all that long endeavor which began when, in 1889, the Kaiser paid his first State visit to any European sovereign by journeying to Constantinople. With characteristic malice and zeal, the Prussian diplomats set to work to fan the passions of the late allies and to create a tempest which would render the continuance of the League impossible.

I said at the begining of this chapter that in the story of Salonika, Adrianople, and Scutari is to be found the immediate preface of the present war. The truth of that statement so far as Salonika is concerned will perhaps be clear already. In the case of Scutari the position was rather different. That fortress held out for a long time, but the Montenegrins wanted it and determined to have it. The powers ordered Montenegro to stop the siege, but the men of the Black Mountain were not taking orders from the Powers, and at last they

succeeded. But they had not done with the Powers. In the end they were forced to give it up, and it became the capital of Albania, a state created on a foundation of the mutual suspicions of the rulers of Europe. Adrianople, too, held out long after the rest of the Turkish dominions had passed into other hands, but it fell at the last and for a time it seemed that only Constantinople would remain to the Turk in Europe.

But Germany had done her work well, and Bulgaria went to war with Serbia and with Greece. Roumania took a hand, and the Turk saw his opportunity and came back and retook Adrianople. Utterly defeated, Bulgaria had to give in, and when finally the partition was made, she, who had suffered more heavily than any nation in the original war, got the smallest share of the spoils. The Balkan League had come to an end. Instead of the unity which had achieved so much there were only new hatreds, new grievances and Germany and Austria were free to dream once more of the possession of Salonika and the dominion which should stretch from the Baltic to the Mediterranean.

It is impossible to blame too heavily the diplomacy which made it possible for such a condition of things to come about, but it is only too clear that the result achieved is exactly what was intended by at least one of the parties to the trans-

action. Whether or not the other Powers could have brought about happier results is a point which the future may decide; the one thing certain is that Prussian methods had achieved a victory, and had left the Balkans ripe for a renewal of strife.

They had robbed those beautiful countries of the prospect of peace and they had made ready the way for the conflict which is shaking the world at this time, and it cannot be doubted that the clever people of the Wilhelmstrasse were very pleased with themselves. There is some small consolation in the fact that history will know how to condemn them.

CHAPTER II

THE BALKANS AND THE WAR

WE are so far already from the beginning of the war that it is necessary to run over very briefly the events which went before the August days which saw the violation of Belgian neutrality.

The heir to the Austrian throne was the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In many of the circles of his own land he was unpopular, and regarded with suspicion. Moreover, he was morganatically married, and in no case could his children succeed him. On June 28, 1914, he and his wife paid a visit to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. It must be remembered that Bosnia had been annexed by the Austrians, and that its people are mainly of the Slav race and suspected of sympathy with Serbia.

On the occasion of this visit the police of Sarajevo were given orders to take no precautions for the safety of the visitors, and were told that the military would provide all the protection that was necessary. While the visitors were driving from the station, a bomb was thrown at their

On their way from the Town Hall to the hospital another person fired at the Archduke and his wife with a revolver, and mortally wounded both of them.

All the circumstance of the assassinations is mysterious. It is true that the man who fired the shots was a Serb, though not a subject of Serbia. It is true that the crime is said to have been planned in Belgrade, but it has never been proved that there was any knowledge of it in official Serbian circles. It is undoubtely true that the event was regarded with satisfaction in many parts of Austria, and we all know how extremely useful the Austrian government found it. On July 23 an ultimatum was presented to Serbia which required her not only to lick the dust from the boots of Austria but also to give thanks prettily for the meal. A more thoroughly abominable document could not be imagined, and Serbia was given forty-eight hours in which to make her submission.

And Serbia submitted. On eight of the ten chief points she gave way altogether, and she did not explicitly refuse submission on the other two. But her submission was useless. She was not intended to submit for the Germanic Powers had made all their preparations and were quite ready for the war of which they had dreamed for so long. On July 28, Austria declared war on Serbia, and the nations of Europe were whirled into conflict.

Russia was drawn in as the natural protector of Slav peoples. On August 1 Germany declared war on Russia, and on France on August 3. There followed the violation of Belgium and the entry of England.

It is difficult in writing of Balkan affairs at this time to keep strictly to the matter in hand, because those affairs are inextricably linked with the affairs of the world and there are such countless reactions between them. This war has become quite clearly and definitely a struggle for freedom in which all the servants of freedom in the world are now united. From the very beginning the German dream was one of subjugation and of a dominion of force, and through the long years of the conflict the fact has been made plain. But it is necessary to remember that it did begin as an attack on Serbia, and to bear the fact in mind because of the influence which it must have on the shaping of events after the victory has been won.

Serbia was attacked because she, the rallying point and the hope of the Balkans, stood between Austria and Salonika, and also between Germany and Constantinople. With Serbia strong and established, it was hopeless for Austria to dream of the port on the Aegean of which she had dreamed for so long, and there existed, too, across Germany's road to the East, an abiding menace. In the Prus-

sian view the essential step towards the fulfilling of their ambition was the abolition of Serbia, with the simultaneous crushing of Russia and France which must go with the abolition.

While the armies were swinging into action in Flanders, France and Russia, Austria set to work to deal with Serbia, and attacked the little country with a great army. For four months there was fierce and bitter fighting, and at last, on December 2, 1914, the invaders reached the capital, Belgrade. Three days later they were driven out again and thrust northward once more, and for the next six months the enemy were too busy elsewhere to return to the attack.

It was an amazing performance—a triumph of intensely mobile troops over a conventionally armed and equipped modern army. The Serbian soldier with his long loaf of bread, his hundred cartridges and his rifle could go anywhere at a moment's notice in the shortest possible time. Moving swiftly among the mountains of his land, he harrassed and tormented and destroyed the Austrians, very much as the British troops were harrassed by the Boers in the last South African war. But there was one thing lacking in the Serbian army, and a more deadly foe than the Austrian was busy through all the country. There came an epidemic of typhus, and the Serbs had no medical service capable of dealing with it.

American readers will not need to be reminded of the part their country played in the early days of the war, nor will it ever be forgotten in Europe. Medical missions were hurried to Serbia from America and from England. Doctors and nurses and stores were sent, and a most gallant, and in the end an effective, fight was made against the disease. Some of us know something of the horrors which those volunteers had to face, and though there is no need to dwell on them here, I have myself heard stories at first hand which leave nothing at all to the imagination. But the sorrows of Serbia were only beginning; there were far more bitter things in store for her.

While all this had been happening, and indeed in the first three months of the war, Turkey had chosen the part which she intended to play, the part which had always been assigned to her by the Prussian. On the outbreak of war she declared her neutrality, as did Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania. England, France and Russia gave assurances that, if she remained neutral, she would not be disturbed either during or after the war, and there were many Turks who sincerely desired to remain at peace, but other influences were too strong. Germany had been at work for a quarter of a century, and the time had come when she needed the harvest of the long sowing. It was pointed out that this was the time when Egypt

and Cyprus might be recovered from England. Every imaginable cause of offense against England was magnified and insisted upon. Enver Bey, the most powerful man in Turkey, had recently been appointed Minister of War, and he was altogether German in sympathy. A German general, Liman Pasha was put in command of the Turkish army, and on October 28 a Turkish fleet bombarded Odessa, and the running blaze of war had reached far into Asia and the north of Africa. The campaigns in Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia became inevitable: the way was cleared for the tragedy of Gallipoli, and a new point and seriousness was given to those small street campaigns in India which have occupied so much of the attention of England all through the war.

But though Turkey had joined with the Central Empires, their way was not yet clear with the Balkans. Italy still stood apart, and Germany was anxious not to draw her into the conflict. At the beginning of February, 1915, Italy informed Austria that any further action in the Balkans would be regarded as an unfriendly act, so there was one reason the more for leaving Serbia alone. But Italy had dreams and desires of her own. On the eastern coast of the Adriatic Austria holds territory which was once the possession of Venice, and Italy saw a chance to recover her lost provinces. On May 25 she declared war on Austria, and one

chief reason for inaction in the Balkans was gone.

At the time, however, the Central Powers had another Balkan affair on their hands. In February, English and French ships bombarded the forts on the Dardanelles. At the end of April the first landing was made on the Gallipoli Peninsula, and on August 6 there was the second landing. The world knows the story of the tragic failure; all that I have to do here is to point out that while there remained the most remote prospect of the success of the undertaking it was the gravest menace to the German plan, and our enemies were compelled to deal with it before attempting any other enterprise. But before the end of August it was plain that Gallipoli was a failure, and the consequences of that failure followed swiftly. It is time to glance at the position of Greece and Bulgaria.

In Greece at the beginning of the war, M. Venezelos was in power. You will remember that he was practically the creator of the Balkan League. His was the dream of a federation of the Balkan States which should secure peace to the peninsula. It is, indeed, still the only means whereby the claims of nationality can be safeguarded and the whole problem solved. The establishment of German rule or the restoration of the Turkish Empire would mean the end of that dream for one or perhaps for many generations; it might even mean

the death of those valiant little nations, since Germany has proved conclusively that she will not tolerate nationality other than her own and that she is prepared to crush the spirit of nationalism with every instrument which science can devise and brutality apply. Realizing these things, Venezelos sought to bind the Balkan States together once again and to reconstitute the League which had been shattered by the war of partition in 1913.

Bulgaria, of course, was the difficulty. Fooled by the Central Powers, she had turned against her former allies and had lost most of the benefits which she had sacrificed so much to obtain. The question was whether Bulgaria could be brought back, whether by gifts she could be persuaded to return to the old allegiance. Venezelos did his utmost to convince both Greece and Serbia of the necessity of making concessions to Bulgaria. The King of Greece refused to listen to his suggestions, and he resigned. Not until it was too late could Serbia be persuaded to make any concessions, and meanwhile the failure at Gallipoli had set the enemy free to work in another direction, and had also convinced the Bulgarian leaders that the German was the winning side. On October 7 a great army under von Mackensen crossed the Serbian frontier, captured Belgrade on October 9, and proceeded to sweep the country. In early November

the Bulgarian army captured Nish, and by the end of the month Serbia had ceased to exist.

The Allies had declared their intention of supporting Serbia, but their help, when it came, was too late and utterly insufficient. The first Anglo-French troops landed at Salonika on October 5, and the 10th Division was hurried up-country. It got there in time to share the agonies of the retreat when the Serbian army, broken and defeated, was scattered in the mountains. All that the Allies coud do was to occupy the territory of which I have told in the first part of this book.

I do not pretend to be giving a comprehensive review of the almost intolerable complex of Balkan affairs during the war, and I am not going to add to the confusion by dealing at length with Greek affairs during the months of which I have just been writing. To follow all the threads of the story of the Near East requires a pretty stiff mental effort, coupled with a comprehensive knowledge of history and geography; and all that can be done here is to endeavor to give the broad outlines in a form in which they can be followed without too much exertion. Leaving out, then, the questions which had risen between King Constantine and M. Venezelos, it is enough to say that the statesman was driven into exile, and that the King entered into a secret agreement with Germany and Bulgaria, in consequence of which Fort Rupel

was handed over to the Bulgars on May 25, 1916. A little later a Greek division at Kavalla surrendered and was taken to Germany. At last the followers of M. Venezelos were tormented into action and in September a Committee on National Defence was set up at Salonika.

Meanwhile Roumania had come into the war. It had been by no means clear in the beginning which side she would take, but since the Roumanians are kin to the people of Italy it was guessed that they might be found in the same alliance, especially as the Roumanians desired to regain Transylvania from Austria. Whether or not the time of the Roumanian intervention was happily chosen is a question which cannot be discussed at present. It is enough to record the fact that she declared war on August 27, 1916, and her armies marched into Transylvania, with considerable success at first. But Mackensen invaded the Dobrudja from the south and von Falkenheyn came in from the west. At the end of November the armies joined and on December 6 they took Bucharest, and another Balkan state had been wiped off the map. At the end of 1916 the whole of the Balkan Peninsula was in German hands with the exception of Greece and the portion of Greek Macedonia which is occupied by the Allied forces. The friends of Germany in Greece grew bolder and there was a time when it seemed quite probable that that country,

too, would come in on the side of the Prussian. But a swift and happy series of events led to the abdication of the pro-German King and Queen and the return to power of M. Venezelos, and there are Greek battalions fighting beside our own in Macedonia today.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPORTANCE OF SALONIKA

IF you were to put the phrase which I have placed at the head of this chapter before any ordinary member of the Salonika force and ask him to tell you all about it, he would be badly puzzled. In my time—and I cannot doubt that it is the same today—it did not occur to us that we were important or that our remote and undistinguished occupations had anything to do with the war of which we read in the papers sent out from home. When I came back and people asked me what we were doing in Salonika it was hard to find any satisfactory answer to the question. I could tell, as I have told here, of the making of roads and of the enduring of various discomforts, but all our life seemed so remote from war as it is understood in France. Really it did not seem that we were doing very much, or that we were likely to do anything. We were giving occupation to a certain number of the enemy, and that was the best we could say for ourselves, and it did not appear that we should ever be able to say any-

thing better. We understood from the people at home that we were expected to advance, but our knowledge of the country made us scornful of those suggestions. It was the old story; an army cannot live without its transport and it was not possible to believe that our transport could stand the strain of any advance that would be of practical value.

Indeed, you could not expect anyone serving in Salonika to have any great ideas of the possibilities of the campaign, unless he happened to be a very exalted person on the staff. Undoubtedly operations as seen by the man who plans them are strikingly unlike those same operations from the point of view of the man who carries them out, and the commanders may have thought it possible for us to do all sorts of enterprising things. But if they did, they did not order us to do them, and we continued to make roads. One advance was certainly made, and in the summer of 1916 the Serbians were able to recover a tiny bit of their own country at Monastir. I remember that about the same time an inspiring story was circulated; it was said that General Sarrail had been inspecting the enemy's arrangements on the whole front from an aeroplane, and immediately we had a whole crop of cheering rumors. But they came to nothing, and at this time of writing, nearly two years later, the position remains very much what

it was then, with the exception that the newspapers have ceased to predict an advance from Salonika.

Of course such an advance could be made. I can see that now, if I could not at the time. The valley of the Vardar practically runs into the valley of the Morava which leads on to Belgrade. Along this route ran the Roman road from Belgrade to Salonika and the present railway follows the same course. If the Bulgars—who happen to be some of the best trench-diggers on earth—could be pounded out of their positions, if we could get up artillery and supplies enough, the thing could be done. I know that since I left the country the work of road-making has gone forward at a great rate and that the transport problem is certainly far less serious than it was in my time. Even so, of course, we should meet it again directly we had passed beyond the zone of our occupation, and it is certain that the railway would not be left in condition to be of any service, but no one can doubt that, given adequate force and arrangements for supply, the adventure could be as successful as was the Austrian sweep through Serbia in 1915.

It is certain that the enemy must realize this fact at least as clearly as we do, and that realization must compel him to detach a considerable force to guard the front which we are holding. I am writing at a time when tremendous things are happening on the Western front and no one

can tell what the position will be at the end of a month or even of a week, and it is not possible to say what will have happened before these words are in print. But if you will look back to this first week of April, 1918, I think you will agree that there could be no more unpleasant news for the enemy at this time than that of a powerful movement northwards from Salonika. I do not imagine that anything of the kind is likely to happen, but I am quite sure that it would happen if a sufficiently powerful enemy force had not been left to make any such experiment unprofitable. It is no small part of the art of war to keep your foes waiting in idleness to prevent you from doing something which you do not really mean to attempt, and I am beginning to suspect that from this point of view alone the Salonika expedition has been justified—though I should have found it hard to believe anything of the kind when I was serving in the profoundly irritating country or for many months after I returned.

But there is an aspect of the importance of Salonika which is political rather than purely military. In parenthesis, it is well to note that our original landing was made on the invitation of M. Venezelos. Whether or not the idea of the landing originated with the great statesman it is not possible to say at present, but it is at least probable, and it is quite certain that later fruits

of it have been such as he would desire. For a long time it did not appear that any real good was to result from the adventure, and indeed it caused such an amount of irritation in Greece as to make it seem a mistake. It was, too, horribly costly, especially in ships. In its original purpose, as an aid to Serbia, it was a ghastly failure, and as a part of the world campaign against Germany it resembled, in 1916, nothing so much as a spirited attempt to shoot an elephant with a pop-gun. But at this time it is possible to see another and greater justification for it than that which I have mentioned. It is possible to realize that in years to come it may appear as one of the really happy inspirations of the war.

In the first place, our occupation provided a foothold for the remnants of the Serbian army and a starting-point for the hopes of the Serbian people. If we had not been there it is hard to think what would have become of those fine soldiers. Scattered in all directions, hunted through the mountains of Albania, they were in a terrible position. Even Greece was not open to them, seeing that the King of Greece had dismissed M. Venezelos for declaring that Greece would stand by her treaty obligations to Serbia. Without organization, almost without arms, they could only have remained as fugitives, scattered and useless to the end of the war. But the fact that their allies held Salonika

gave them another chance, and they were quick to take it. They came to the city by land and sea. They were equipped and their army was reconstituted till it became once more an effective force. And in Salonika itself there was no more heartening sight than that of those Serbian soldiers with their new uniforms and their happy faces. It was worth while just to have given them another chance, and to have retained for their nation a foothold on the peninsula.

And in the second place our occupation defeated the aims of the pro-German party in Greece. Nothing but our presence in Macedonia could have accomplished that. The Greek Nationalists made Salonika their headquarters and there they received M. Venezelos on his return from exile. It is possible to put the matter in another way and say that if we had not been there the entire peninsula would have been under German control by this time. Every harbor would have been a refuge for her ships and submarines, and the whole of the campaign in Palestine would have been in peril. Austria would have gained that which she desired originally to obtain, and hope for the Balkan races would have been at an end.

As it is we hold a position which is a perpetual menace to all the Eastern operations of the enemy. It has been said that Constantinople, Belgrade and Salonika are the three keys to the Balkans and

therefore to the great route to the Persian Gulf. While we hold one there can be little comfort in the possession of the other two. Judged by the map, our occupation of Macedonia may seem a small affair, but it is so utterly important as the position of a pawn on the chess-board which, so long as it remains, forbids the progress of the more majestic pieces and has power to destroy even the greatest of them. It has a moral effect which is far greater than the material inconvenience which is caused to our foes, and it is possible to imagine what an amount of irritation there must be to the German High Command in the presence of the bit of occupied and fortified territory on their flank. For such a base is very much like a gun. In itself it is small and of little importance, but when it goes off it has a disturbingly long range. And there is something else. Our continued presence in Salonika is something in the nature of a banner to all the Balkan peoples. It is an enduring token of the failure of the Central Powers to reach at least one of the main points at which they are aiming. We may be very sure that it is noted in Sofia, and it is necessary to remember that Bulgaria was never wholeheartedly in favor of the war. To Serbia and Roumania it must appear as one little ray of light in the midst of their present darkness, and there must be many of the scattered peoples who realize that, since we

remain, the Hun is not yet victorious, neither is all hope at an end for the little nations.

I am thoroughly aware of the arguments against the expedition, and I have stated quite a number of them myself at various times. I know, too, that there are remarks scattered through this book which may seem to contradict the substance of this chapter, but I have let them stand. They represent the views of the man on the spot, and when they were written they appeared to be true. But at this time it is quite certain that in spite of all these things which can be urged against it, the Salonika adventure is more than justified.

CHAPTER IV

PEACE IN THE BALKANS

THERE are a good many people who, irritated by the complexity and endless complications of Balkan affairs, are accustomed to declare that those unhappy nations must settle their quarrels among themselves, fighting, if need be, to the point of mutual extermination. There are still more who cherish a comfortable ignorance of the whole business and ask what they have to do with the squabbles of a lot of half-educated savages three thousand miles away. And if those are the conditions in England, I imagine that Americans will be still more inclined to regard the solution of the Balkan problem as a matter with which they can have no concern. Yet if there is one thing which this war has demonstrated more clearly than another it is that the peace of the world cannot be secure while there is either strife or the occasion of strife in the Peninsula.

I have attempted to show that the real cause of this was the Prussian desire to dominate the

East. Through the Balkans ran the old trade routes from Europe to Asia. To a certain extent those routes were neglected during the period of the development of navigation, but the laying of the first mile of railway foretold their reopening. As land transport of every kind becomes swifter and cheaper, so will the importance of the old routes increase, and the way that runs through Belgrade, Nish, Sofia, and Adrianople must increase and not decrease in importance. It is certain that at the end of the war, the Central Powers will be so exhausted that they will be in no condition to enter upon fresh adventures for a generation or more, but it is equally certain that their eyes will be turning ever in the same direction. It is no small part of the business of the rest of us to make certain that meanwhile there shall be erected across the path a stable barrier.

And there is something more than this. It was declared by the Allies as long ago as December 21, 1916, that "no peace is possible which does not secure recognition of the principle of nationalities and of the free existence of small states." It is of the essence of our aims to secure freedom for all nations, just as it is of the aim of the Prussian to Prussianize all that he can conquer. Before ever the war began, in Poland and again in Alsace, the Prussian demonstrated his hatred and fear of nationalism, and in Belgium and Serbia during the

war he has insisted again on his determination to tolerate no nationality but his own. If he had his way in the Balkans, he would bring them all under his autocratic rule; if the Allies are at all lax at the conclusion of peace he will contrive that affairs of the peninsula are left in such a condition that they will be exposed to the recurrence of internal strife in which, as in 1912 and 1913, his diplomacy will have a chance to shape affairs according to his desires. I want to insist as strongly as possible that we shall have failed in our aims if the conclusion of peace does not bring justice and content to the nation of the Balkans. We shall have come short of the thing which we set out to perform, and in so far as we fail in this area, the triumph will remain with the enemies of freedom.

So much having been affirmed, it must be stated that the re-drawing of the map of the Balkans is one of the most perplexing tasks which anyone could have to undertake, and it is likely to require all the tact and goodwill of all concerned. The difficulty of it must never be forgotten, or else we shall have some enthusiastic fool coming forward with a ready-made plan and persuading people into its acceptance. If anything is to be made of the business, all the obstacles will need to be frankly and fairly faced. Let us consider some of them.

There is first of all the question of Turkey.

When the Turk first came to Europe, and in those distant days which saw him besieging Vienna while his ships ruled the Mediterranean, he was a menace. Since that time and through all the centuries of his decline, he has been merely a nuisance, but a very great nuisance indeed. It is not possible to doubt that the conclusion of peace must see the end of his rule in Europe. He has no sort of claim for any consideration, and he must go.

The case of the Bulgar is very difficult. He was in the land before the Turk, and he was of those who preserved their nationality through the centuries of Turkish rule, nor can the part which he played in 1912 be forgotten. Duped by the Central Powers in 1913, and dragged half-heartedly into the present war, he is more to be pitied than any of his allies. The Bulgar nation has as secure a right to a place in the peninsula as any other and any peace which seeks its suppression will be falling short of the expressed aims of those who are at present its enemies. With the King of Bulgaria there may be an account to settle, but with his subjects we can have no quarrel. That is to say, the western nations must and will desire that Bulgaria shall be treated fairly.

Whether the desire will be immediately echoed by our allies who are his neighbors is another matter. War leaves ugly scars behind it, and it is certain that both Serbia and Roumania will be

cherishing unpleasant memories. They will be blaming Bulgaria for much that their lands have suffered and no doubt they will be blaming her justly. Also they will want recompense for all that they have endured, and the fact that their desires coincide with so many of Bulgaria's will help to complicate matters. At this time of writing, for instance, Bulgaria is in possession of the Dobrudja and it is not in the least likely that she will be happy to restore that district to Roumania. There must, too, be disagreement over the Aegean coast which will bring her into opposition with Serbia; and Macedonia remains the problem which it has always been.

The position of Serbia is, indeed, one of peculiar difficulty. She desires an outlet to the coast, and her desires in that direction are counter to those of many other people, and complicated by the facts of the stubborn Balkan geography. It generally happens that races regard geographical boundaries, but the Balkan people seem to have looked upon natural obstacles as things to be surmounted, and that habit has helped to increase the difficulty of defining boundaries. There is, however, one natural outlet for Serbia by way of the Drin valley to the Adriatic. Her only other obvious road to the sea is by way of the Vardar to Salonika. When it is remembered that Italy has a claim to the Adriatic coast and that Greece holds Salonika, the coming

need for forbearance and a spirit of mutual accomodation will be obvious.

These are just specimens of the difficulties which must be dealt with, and there are many more of the same nature. They are not insuperable, but they will call for the most careful application of the principles of justice, and for something more.

There is, again, the question of those districts which are at present under rule of Austria. Serbia has an ethnographic claim to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Roumania a similar claim to Transylvania. The recognition of the principle of nationality certainly points to the restoration of these areas, and in the same way Roumania should receive Bessarabia which was before the war in the possession of Russia. That, of course, raises an entirely fresh series of problems. All the time that she remained a normal Power, Russia was intensely interested in the Balkans. It is impossible to say whether or not she will have regained anything that can be recognized as a government by the end of the war, and it is as obviously impossible to conclude any treaties or enter into any agreements with any of the hectic individuals who are shouting their claims to speak for her at present. I am uncommonly glad that the requirements of this book do not make it necessary to produce any suggestions as to the future of Russia, but the fact that Russia may presently become a nation again must be re-

membered and arranged for in any settling of Balkan affairs. It does not seem unreasonable in any event to suggest that Bessarabia should be attached to Roumania, and it might make matters easier in other directions.

The old Russia, of course, would have been thinking hard about Constantinople. That city is also the home of a dream of the Greeks who have desired for a long time to see it restored to them as the old capital of their empire and the ancient dwelling place of the ruler of the Greek church. But the way for Constantinople, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles seems to be that they should be internationalized and that the forts should be dismantled, in fairness to Russia as to all the other nations which may need to use them. And I am not sure that Salonika should not be internationalized as well.

I put this forward merely as a suggestion, and I am perfectly aware that to many people—and especially to the Greeks—it will be an unpleasant suggestion. But it is an idea which has several advantages. The area which is at present occupied by the Allied armies, bounded roughly by the Vardar, the Bela Sitza mountains and the Strama is as hopeless a tangle ethnologically as you will find in all Macedonia. All the races of the Peninsula are to be found in its villages, scattered about its plain or clustering in its hills. If that area were

put under international control there would at least be no violation of any clearly-defined national rights.

It is from Salonika that the work of reconstruction in the Balkans will be most easily begun. If our occupation had done nothing else at all, the roads which we have made would remain to be our memorial. Through the months and the years our men have been at work they have made a system of roads through all the area, and from that center the roads can be extended in all directions. We have given the framework of civilization to a considerable space of country and from Salonika, as from the handle of a fan, the framework could stretch out in all directions.

It is true, of course, that the Macedonian of today dislikes our roads. The bullocks which crawl along with his queer little creaking wagons go with unshod feet and the wagons themselves have wheels with wooden tires. For centuries his roads consisted merely of tracks of beaten earth, soft underfoot. Our roads have their foundation of rock and their layer of broken stone, and they are too hard for the feet of his cattle or for his wheels. The consequence is that instead of using our roads the natives commonly make for themselves a track beside them, and they will go any reasonable distance out of their way to avoid using the roads. But it is merely a matter of custom and custom

gives way in time to advantage. If the Macedonian found that it was profitable to carry his goods about at a slightly swifter rate than his present mile and a half an hour it is not to be doubted that he would adopt iron tires and more expeditious cattle, and thus would discover the advantage of our roads. And once a habit of that kind is formed it spreads very rapidly.

All the country has such great possibilities. I can only speak from experience of that part of it which the Allied forces are holding, but I know that there are great fertile tracts all through the peninsula and all of its nations might be happy and prosperous and of service to the world. All that is required is a secure peace, and equitable government, and organization of the means of transport. And we have, as I have said, the beginning of this last in that area which is so intimately known to so many of our men at this time. With Salonika held as an international port it would be free for Serbia and Bulgaria and Greece to use its harbor and there would be no more jealousy over its possession. The borders of these nations would touch the borders of the town and by rail and by road their merchandise could come down to it from far inland, and, rebuilt after the cleansing of the fire which destroyed so much of it in 1917, it may stand greater and more prosperous than ever, serving three nations instead of one.

So there is a suggestion; doubtless there will be many others. But when the time comes for the new boundaries to be defined it will be necessary for the great Powers to avoid too much interference, and especially to see that there is no attempt to exploit the differences of opinion which are quite certain to arise. It will be for them to stand aside as far as possible, watching all the time to see that there is no unfairness, but giving to the peoples concerned as free a hand as possible. With care and patience and wise guidance where it is needed the Balkan states will come to an agreement at the last.

When it is reached, that agreement must be guaranteed by the nations of the world. It will not be enough to leave their interests in the future as they have been left in the past in the hands of such immediately interested parties as Austria and Russia. The preservation of their integrity must be the business of all of us, of America as well as of England, France and Italy. This is the greatest opportunity there has ever been for solving the problem, and when the solution is found we cannot afford to run the risk that any malice or greed or envy of the future shall be able to destroy it.

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